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DISGUISED AND OVERT SPINOZISM AROUND 1700

*Papers Presented at the International Colloquium
held at Rotterdam, 5-8 October 1994*

EDITED BY

WIEP VAN BUNGE

AND

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INTRODUCTION

There are many excellent reasons for being interested in the fate of Spinozism at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. The conference held in October 1994 at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam on *Disguised and Overt Spinozism around 1700* was organised with five particular reasons in mind.

As is well-known, Spinoza's works were almost universally decried when they were first published. For more than a century, Spinozism was widely held to be the most dangerous philosophical world-view that had ever been concocted. An obvious reason to explore the first reactions to Spinoza's views is supplied by the simple fact that throughout Europe a truly awesome amount of intellectual energy was invested in the destruction, principally of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), but also of his *Ethics* (1677). To all intents and purposes, a campaign was waged to stop the spreading of this new and pernicious philosophy, and even the greatest admirers of Spinoza's achievements would have to agree that several of the philosophers and theologians who spearheaded this campaign made a number of extremely acute observations on Spinoza's work. The well-worn cliché that the Dutch philosopher was essentially misunderstood by his early critics no longer seems adequate. Rather, it would seem, Spinoza was so violently attacked precisely because his early readers clearly saw what his philosophy amounted to. Indeed, they saw themselves confronted with a way of looking at the world that at the time was truly revolutionary.

Secondly, over the last few decades it has become abundantly clear that the reports originating from Spinoza's day that his ideas soon also met with approval, in the Netherlands as well as in the surrounding countries, were to a large extent based on fact. Although, even at the height of the hunt for 'Spinozists', Spinozism never seems to have served as a school comparable to, for instance, Cartesianism, Spinoza did have his followers, both at home and abroad. More and more traces appear of loosely organised groups in which Spinoza's works were studied and discussed, in a manner reminiscent of the Amsterdam 'circle' of Spinoza of the 1660's.

A third motive for studying the early impact of Spinozism is closely related to the first two, since we now know that several of the so-

called 'refutations' of Spinozism that were published 'around 1700', were actually highly skillful efforts at propagating Spinoza's views. In view of the massive—and to a large extent 'official'—revulsion towards Spinozism, sympathisers of this particular philosophy had often to resort to silence, secrecy, or the use of 'double language'. What is more, some of the 'real' refutations of Spinozism reveal a remarkable agreement with several of the ideas they purport to reject.

A further reason to take the immediate impact of Spinozism very seriously is supplied by the ambiguous character of the period involved, which is usually termed the 'early Enlightenment'. Traditionally, the last two decades of the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth century have been represented as an age of transition, a period of crisis, an essentially chaotic period in which, however, European culture underwent a decisive metamorphosis: the providential world-view would be definitively replaced by a set of ideas that would make up the very core of the 'Enlightenment'. Since the characteristics of this age are being discussed tirelessly both by historians and by philosophers, any attempt to further elucidate the nature of the 'early' Enlightenment, in this case by exploring the particular contribution of Spinozism to the period, must surely be welcomed by both.

Finally, the early reception of Spinozism may well provide useful insights for its systematical interpretation. Although many Spinoza scholars feel an essentially timeless kinship with the main tenets of Spinoza's philosophy, it would be unsanitary not to keep in mind the historical context from which this philosophy arose, and in which it first saw the light of day. In attempting to grasp Spinozism, both its most superficial supporters and its fiercest early Enlightenment critics had at least this advantage, that they shared a historical proximity to the Dutch philosopher which we by necessity lack.

In formulating the programme of our conference, we have been led partly by our own preferences, based on the arguments above, and partly by the quality of recent research related to our own interests. Meanwhile, our editorial policy has been liberal. From the start, we have stressed that the large number of papers involved called for brevity. In some cases, however, we have been reluctant to abbreviate the final versions that we received, by virtue of the quality of the text and the wealth of bibliographical references supplied. For similar reasons we have included Siebe Thissen's paper on the revival of

Spinozism in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century.

In conclusion, we should like to express our gratitude to the *Universiteitsfonds* and the Department of Philosophy of the Erasmus University for their financial support, to Manon Geluk, Henri Krop and Malcolm de Mowbray for their cheerful assistance and expert advice in preparing the present volume, and, of course, to E.J. Brill for publishing it.

The editors.

1. THE NETHERLANDS

THE BANNING OF SPINOZA'S WORKS IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC (1670-1678)

Jonathan Israel

Most of the existing secondary literature firmly gives the impression that while Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) and *Opera Posthuma* (1677) incensed the Dutch Reformed Church and its synods, the Dutch secular authorities—which in Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht meant especially the regents of the city governments—adopted an initially tolerant and permissive attitude, and were decidedly slow to prohibit the philosopher's publications. Several commentators also stress the role of the Pensionary of Holland, Johan de Witt, who has widely been seen (and not without justification) as having contributed to the lack of any general ban on the *TTP*, on the part of the States of Holland, during the years 1670-1672, and has also been seen (but this time with less justification, in my view) as having thereby made possible the free and unimpeded sale, and circulation, of the *TTP* in the initial period after its publication.

Thus, Henry Allison, in his *Benedict de Spinoza. An Introduction*, states that the outcry against the *TTP* “led to efforts to suppress it, all of which were frustrated by De Witt”.¹ B.S. Gregory, in his generally useful introduction to the recent new English translation of the *TTP* assumes—in my view wrongly—that, despite the fierce disapproval being expressed in many quarters, Spinoza's sensational book circulated freely for several years, as well as makes the error of supposing that the work was also circulating in a Dutch version.² Almost all scholars who touch on this subject have asserted that there was no serious effort to suppress Spinoza's work on the part of the secular authorities in the United Provinces until the passing of the well-known edict of the Hof of Holland, of July 1674, which banned the *TTP* together with Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Lodewijk Meyer's

¹ H.E. Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza. An Introduction* (New Haven, Conn., 1987), p. 18.

² B.S. Gregory, “Introduction” to Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Translated by Samuel Shirley (Leiden, 1989), p. 27.

Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres and the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*.³ One leading authority on the Dutch seventeenth century, N. Japikse, even argued that the ban of 1674 was an isolated and exceptional event, uncharacteristic of the toleration and freedom which (according to him) prevailed in Holland at that time, maintaining that neither before, nor after, the downfall of De Witt in 1672 was there any serious attempt to prevent the publication, distribution, and sale of Spinoza's books.⁴ H.A. Enno van Gelder, in his important *Getemperde vrijheid* (1972) certainly went some way towards qualifying the excessively optimistic view of Dutch toleration in the Golden Age which had been usual until then, pointing out that the Holland regents were intermittently capable of a quite vigorous repression of books and authors which they considered dangerous, or seditious, and that we should not underestimate the difficulties which a philosopher such as Spinoza was faced with.⁵ Yet Van Gelder too assumes that the *TTP* was sold more or less freely in its Latin version in Dutch book-shops, until July 1674, that is four and a half years after its publication, and that, also after that edict, no very systematic effort was made to combat the sale and distribution of his books. Were all this really true it would indeed point to an exceptional degree of freedom of thought, and of the press, in late seventeenth-century Holland and a high level of toleration. For it is undeniable that there was a furious reaction against Spinoza's ideas in general and that the *TTP* and *Ethics*, in particular, were regarded as two of the most offensive and seditious works of the age.

However, the view that Spinoza's *TTP* sold more or less freely in its Latin version for over four years is, in my opinion, rather misleading and part of a more general tendency, which needs correcting, to overestimate the ease with which Spinoza's books circulated and were available in the United Provinces in the late seventeenth and also early eighteenth century. For while it is undeniable that the anti-Spinoza campaign in the Dutch Republic was never sufficiently systematic and intense—and, in any case, could not have been, given the Republic's institutional structure—to achieve a rigorous suppre-

³ *Groot Placaet-Boek vervattende de placaten [...] van de Staten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden ende van de [...] Staten van Hollandt* ('s Gravenhage, 1658-1796), 9 vols., III, p. 523-4.

⁴ N. Japikse, "Spinoza en De Witt", *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandse Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde* 6th ser. VI (1928), p. 13.

⁵ H.A. Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid* (Groningen, 1972), p. 165-6, 176-85.

sion, it was sufficiently effective to compel Spinoza to adopt the furtive methods of a more or less clandestine author and to affect, in a fundamental way, the timing and also, in some respects, the content and style of his books as well as the languages in which these books circulated. Indeed, the very fact that Spinoza laid his *Ethics* aside in the mid 1660's, concluding that circumstances were not yet propitious for its publication, and decided to write the *TTP*, the express purpose of which was to advance "liberty to philosophize" by demonstrating the necessity and also the innocuousness of intellectual freedom—and one of the main aims of which was to lessen popular reverence for the authority of the public Church, and its spokesmen, by changing the public's attitude towards Scripture—shows that Spinoza himself believed that the forces of censorship in the Dutch Republic at that time represented a formidable obstacle to his philosophical activity and plans to publish.⁶ He saw, correctly I would argue, that he needed to clear a path for his *Ethics* by first delivering a heavy blow to the power of censorship and intolerance in the United Provinces of his time.

Furthermore, the prevailing opinion that the *TTP* sold and circulated without hindrance in the United Provinces for more than four years, until the summer of 1674, sits uneasily with several fairly well-known early comments on the book's reception. Thus, scholars have long been aware of the letter of Johan Georg Graevius, professor of rhetoric at Utrecht, to Leibniz, of 12 April 1671, in which he designates the *TTP* a *liber pestilentissimus*, mentioning the rumours that its author was a Jew, Spinoza, and adding that because the author opens the window to "Atheism" as "widely as possible [...] his book is forbidden by the authorities",⁷ but have simply assumed (wrongly, in my view) that Graevius was mistaken and that there was, in fact, at that time, no ban. Similarly, another comment which predates the edict of 1674, made by J.B. Stoupe in his brief account of Spinoza in his *Religion des Hollandois* (1673), asserts that Spinoza's

⁶ J. Freudenthal, *Spinoza, Leben und Lehre* (Heidelberg, 1927), 2 vols. I, p. 148-62; see also the editorial remarks in Spinoza, *The Collected Works*. Translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton, 1985) vol. I, p. 350-351.

⁷ K.O. Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring* ('s Gravenhage, 1896), p. 345-346; J. Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften, Urkunden und nicht-amtlichen Nachrichten* (Leipzig, 1899), p. 193: "...et ejus liber eandem ob causam proscriptus est ab Ordinibus".

“sectateurs n’osent pas se découvrir, parce que son livre renverse absolument les fondamens de toutes les religions et qu’il a esté condamné par un décret public des Etats, et qu’on a deffendu de le vendre bien qu’on ne laisse pas de le vendre publiquement.”⁸

Nor does it seem likely that Jean Brun can be referring only to the Hof of Holland’s edict of 1674 when he points out in his lengthy reply to Stoupe, his *Véritable Religion des Hollandois* (1675), in connection with the *TTP*, that “Messieurs les Etats ont taché de l’étouffer en sa naissance et l’ont condamné, et en ont deffendu le débit, par un décret public”, adding that if the ban in the United Provinces was less than fully effective, the authorities in France, England, Switzerland and Germany had not been entirely successful in preventing its circulation either.⁹

If a correct understanding of the matter is to be arrived at, I would argue, what chiefly needs to be appreciated is that suppression of books and the printed word in the Dutch Republic in Spinoza’s time, and for many decades after, by no means ensued only when books were singled out and expressly prohibited by provincial governments and high courts. Rather there were, in the case of works dealing with theological and philosophical issues, from the early 1650’s onwards, a set of general rules of censorship anchored, above all, in the series of anti-Socinian decrees issued by the States of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht (and also by the States General, for the entire United Provinces including the Generality Lands), during the early 1650’s. Holland’s anti-Socinian decree of 19 September 1653, re-issued on 14 December 1654, in effect laid down guidelines which were then adopted by the rest of the United Provinces. To grasp the significance of this one must not define the term ‘Socinian’ as employed in these edicts in the restricted way one would when discussing Socinianism as a specific theological tendency. The fact that at that time, in the Dutch context, works such as Meyer’s *Philosophia* and the *TTP* were included under the general rubric ‘Socinian’ is sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that these very books are described as “Sociniaensche Boecken” in the Hof of Holland’s edict of 1674 and a variety of other contemporary bans,

⁸ J.B. Stoupe, *La Religion des Hollandois* (Cologne, 1673), p. 66; see also G. Cohen, *La séjour de Saint-Evremond en Hollande et l’entrée de Spinoza dans le champ de la pensée française* (Paris, 1926), p. 72.

⁹ Jean Brun, *La Véritable Religion des Hollandois* (Amsterdam, 1675), 2 vols., I, p. 159-160.

such as the placard of the city of Utrecht, of October 1678, discussed further on in this paper.

That the anti-Socinian legislation of the 1650's remained in force, and was the basis of intellectual censorship in the United Provinces for many decades thereafter, is apparent from a wide variety of evidence besides the wording of the decrees of 1674 and 1678. Again and again we find the anti-Socinian edicts serving as the lynch-pin of theological and philosophical censorship. In Amsterdam, it is true, there was more flexibility and freedom than elsewhere; but this did not mean that publishers and book-sellers could proceed, even there, as if the anti-Socinian legislation did not exist. As with erotic books, and publications touching on anything politically sensitive, a good measure of concealment and furtiveness were indispensable adjuncts of the trade. Much could be got away with but it was not always clear how, and where, to draw the line, and too open a defiance of the law could lead to severe consequences for publishers, book-sellers and authors alike. It is true that when, under pressure from the Hof of Holland, the Amsterdam judicial authorities raided the city's book-stores, in 1669, in search of "Sociniaensche Boecken", including without doubt Meyer's *Philosophia* and Koerbagh's *Bloemhof*, some members of the city government seem to have warned the book-sellers that they would be raided, 'in secret' beforehand.¹⁰ But the city still went through the motions of seizing such books and the book-sellers still had to get their stocks of copies not only out of sight but off their premises.

Moreover, if Amsterdam was more liberal than the rest and, by the 1660's, tended to turn a blind eye both to Socinian gatherings and the publication of real Socinian works, such as the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, this by no means implies that the city government would not make energetic use of the anti-Socinian placards when confronted by theological or philosophical works which it considered excessively offensive or dangerous. Scholars have tended to regard the prompt and rather harsh suppression of the books of Adriaen Koerbagh, in 1668-1669, as some sort of aberration, an isolated incident hard to account for and quite out of line with Amsterdam's normal attitude towards books strongly objected to by the public Church. But it is arguable that the severe treatment meted

¹⁰ Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, p. 165.

out to Koerbagh in fact shows that there were definite limits to what the regents would tolerate and that they were not prepared to put up with an open, unconcealed attack on the authority of the public Church or too blatant a denial of the fundamentals of the Christian faith as they understood it. Especially Koerbagh's second book, *Een ligt schijnende in duistere plaatsen*, is more wide-ranging and decidedly more provocative than Meyer's *Philosophia*.¹¹ Given the book's contents, it is by no means surprising that the publisher should have taken fright, in the midst of printing, and decided to turn everything over to the authorities rather than proceed with publication.

The central plank of my argument is that there was nothing to prevent suppression of Spinoza's published work on a piecemeal, local basis from the very outset, as is clearly shown by the manner of the Reformed Church's reaction to the appearance of the *TTP* and the strategy with which its synods, classes and consistories sought to combat it. The placards of 1653 and 1654 provided a sufficient basis for city governments to ban books which could be broadly encompassed under the rubric 'Socinian' and to seize stocks of copies from the book-shops. To persuade them to take precisely such action, what the Reformed Church consistories chiefly needed to do was to draw the regents' attention to the books which they deemed most objectionable and show the burgomasters extracts which were clearly incompatible with the doctrines of the Trinity, divinity of Christ, divine authorship of Scripture and other tenets regarded as fundamental to Christian belief.

A classic instance of the early, and swift, suppression of Spinoza's work at local level was what transpired at Leiden. The local Reformed consistory first discussed the publication of the anonymous *TTP* at its meeting of 9 May 1670, expressing the most profound indignation, indeed horror, at the book's contents. It was decided to send a delegation of three spokesmen to the burgomasters to "demonstrate" to them the treatise's "contents and enormities or rather obscenities [vuijligheden], earnestly requesting that the same be seized and suppressed".¹² The burgomasters were quickly persuaded and these then immediately instructed the city's sheriff and his staff to seize all the copies to be found in the city's book-

¹¹ See the editorial comments in Jan & Adriaen Koerbagh, *Een ligt schijnende in duistere plaatsen*, ed. Hubert Vandenbosche (Brussels, 1974; 1st ed. 1668), p. xii-xv.

¹² Gemeentearchief Leiden, Acta kerkeraad V, res. 9 May 1670 art. 4.

stores, a resolution recorded in the Leiden burgomasters' *Notulenboek* as well as in the *acta* of the consistory.¹³

At Utrecht, the Reformed consistory deliberated what to do about the *TTP* even earlier, on 8 April 1670. Although at this time the city of Utrecht was under a States party-faction civic regime, the consistory had had a number of notable recent successes in combatting 'offensive' books. Thus when, in December 1666, the consistory had requested the banning of Meyer's (anonymously published) *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* "like the States of Friesland have done in such a praiseworthy fashion", the burgomasters agreed to do so.¹⁴ Following the ensuing initiative of the Utrecht city burgomasters, the Delegated States of Utrecht sent a circular to the sheriffs of the "respective towns of the province", instructing them to seize all copies from the book-shops under the terms of the States of Utrecht's edict "against Socinian writings".¹⁵ In April 1668, it was the turn of the "blasphemous book of Courbag [Koerbagh]" and again the burgomasters proved responsive.¹⁶ Nor, it would seem were the Utrecht burgomasters any less willing to act against the *TTP*.¹⁷ Indeed, on this occasion too they appear to have initiated a province-wide ban; for while the provincial synod of Utrecht, at their gathering in September 1670, were still debating how to persuade the States of Utrecht to act against the *TTP*, as well as Hobbes' *Leviathan*,¹⁸ at their meeting the following year, in September 1671, the synod, while deploring that still no action had been taken against the *Leviathan* noted briefly that the "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was opgehaelt",¹⁹ implying that the book had been suppressed throughout the province as well as in the city.

That this pattern was repeated also in many other towns is shown by the wording employed by the South Holland Synod which met

¹³ *Ibid.*, res. 16 May 1670, art. 2; Gemeentearchief Leiden St. arch. 191, p. 60, res. burgomasters, 16 May 1670: "is bij de burgemeesteren goedgevonden seker tractaet geintituleert *Theologico Politicq* door den schout vermits desselfs godloose passagien te doen ophalen."

¹⁴ Gemeentearchief Utrecht, Acta kerkeraad VIII, res. 24 and 31 Dec. 1666.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, res 14 Jan., 4 Feb. and 18 March 1667.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, res. 13, 20 and 27 April 1668.

¹⁷ Gemeentearchief Utrecht, Acta Kerkeraad IX, res. 8 and 11 April 1670.

¹⁸ Rijksarchief Utrecht, Provinciale kerkvergadering III, Acta Synodi Provincialis Ultrajectinae, Sept. 1670, sessio 6, art. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Acta Sept. 1671, sessio 6, art. 30; see also Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, p. 130.

at Schiedam in July 1670 in drawing up a resolution on the subject of "licentious printing and the selling of all kinds of foul and blasphemous books". The only work mentioned by name in this resolution was the "scandalous book entitled *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*", deemed a work "as foul and blasphemous as any that are known of or that the world has ever seen, and about which the Synod must complain to the utmost". All the preachers present were requested, on returning to their respective towns, to petition their burgomasters that all such literature be banned and seized from the book-shops "and particularly that foul and utterly blasphemous book the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*".²⁰

Meanwhile, the Haarlem consistory had denounced the *TTP* at its meeting of 27 May 1670, as did that of Amsterdam on 30 June.²¹ We have no details as to local action taken against Spinoza's book in these cities; but it is probable that the book was seized, at least in Haarlem, and some other towns of North Holland, just as was clearly taking place in the towns of South Holland and Utrecht. The efforts of the North Holland Synod, jointly with that of South Holland, to obtain a provincial ban from the States of Holland led to the judgement of the Hof of Holland, of 16 April 1671, which ruled that the publication and distribution of the *TTP*, the *Leviathan* and Meyer's *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* "directly" violated the States of Holland's placard of 19 September 1653.²² The subsequent reluctance of the States of Holland to issue the new edict requested by the synods, and about which the delegates of the North and South Holland synods came to see De Witt on several occasions, presumably was due, at least in some measure, to a lack of enthusiasm on De Witt's part. But this in itself could not detract from the force of the Hof's judgment of April 1671, confirming that those city governments which had banned the *TTP* on the basis of the provincial placard of September 1653 were acting correctly.

My contention is, then, that Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was never freely in circulation, or on sale, in the United Provinces,

²⁰ *Acta der particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holland, 1621-1700*, ed. W.P.C. Knuttel ('s Gravenhage, 1908-16), 6 vols., IV, p. 531.

²¹ Gemeentearchief Haarlem, Acta kerkeraad IX, res. 27 May 1670; in a later resolution the Haarlem consistory described the *TTP* as an "uytstekend godloos boek"; for the Amsterdam consistory and classis, see Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, p. 121, 123.

²² Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, p. 125-127.

not even in the first few months after its publication, even though there was no formal ban against the work by the States of Holland until July 1674. That this amounted to something more than merely a nominal ban is, I would argue, confirmed by the devious manner in which the second edition of the *TTP* (this time bound together with Meyer's *Philosophia*) was published. During 1673, the two books appeared in one, in octavo, with (it would seem three different) fictitious title pages, one purporting to be the *Opera Medica Omnia* of Franciscus de le Boë Sylvius, a celebrated professor of medicine at Leiden, who had died the previous year and whose works could be expected to be avidly sought by scholars and students alike, the second entitled *Operum Historicorum Collectio Secunda* by the famous humanist Daniel Heinsius (d. 1655) and the third entitled Franc. Henriquez de Villacosta, *Archiatři Opera Chirurgica Omnia*.²³ The second of these gave its place of publication as Leiden, the other two Amsterdam. Not unnaturally, there was an immediate outcry at Leiden. At the prompting of the university, the Leiden city government took the matter up with the States of Holland which, on 13 December 1673, ordered the immediate suppression and seizure of these "forbidden and profane books under false titles".²⁴

If the *TTP* at no stage circulated freely, the same would seem to be true in the case of the *Opera Posthuma*. Even though over half a year elapsed between the publication of this famous edition and its formal prohibition by the States of Holland, it would be wrong to suppose that it was ever freely advertised and available in the bookshops. It was apparently in the closing days of 1677, or the first days of 1678, that the publisher Jan Rieuwerts, in Amsterdam began surreptitiously—as we know from a variety of evidence—distributing copies of *B.D.S. Opera Posthuma*. Some notion of the shock which this publication caused to mainstream educated Dutch opinion may be gleaned from the words of the Leiden Reformed consistory at its meeting, at which the book was discussed, on 4 February 1678: "it is a book", declare the *acta*, "which perhaps since the beginning of the world until the present day [...] surpasses all others in godlessness and which endeavours to do away with all religion and set godless-

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 137-8, see also Johannes Vogt, *Catalogus Historico-criticus Librorum Rariorum* (Hamburg, 1747) II, p. 641 and Johann Anton Trinius, *Freydenker-Lexicon oder Einleitung in die Geschichte der neuern Freygeister, ihrer Schrifften und deren Widerlegungen* (Leipzig, 1759), p. 420.

²⁴ Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, p. 138.

ness on the throne".²⁵ At this gathering, as in so many others during the early 1670's, extracts from Spinoza's text were read out aloud to those present so that no-one participating should be in the least doubt as to what they were dealing with. It was resolved to send delegates to the burgomasters requesting the immediate banning of the book in Leiden. Again extracts of Spinoza were read out (presumably from the Dutch version or in translation) to the burgomasters who at once ordered the seizure of the book from the city's book-stores while, at the same time, deciding to "seek to obtain a general prohibition of the book by decree of the States of Holland".²⁶

At The Hague, a city which was the seat of the Hof of Holland but which had no vote in the States of the province, the city council had somewhat less autonomy than was the case with the other cities of Holland. Yet here too, though the procedure was different, there was no requirement to wait until the Hof had issued a decree applying to the entire province, a procedure which was bound to take some months, before acting to suppress Spinoza's work locally. The Reformed consistory of The Hague, no less appalled than its counterpart at Leiden, at once dispatched a delegation to see the prosecuting magistrate of the Hof armed with a request for the immediate suppression of Spinoza's work. On the advice of the magistrate, the consistory's delegates then appeared before the full Hof of Holland at which "several frightful passages from the said book of Spinoza were read out aloud". This had its intended effect and the Hof, besides agreeing to propose a general ban for the whole province to the relevant standing committee of the States of Holland, proceeded to take immediate action within the confines of The Hague itself. The Hof, as the *acta* of the South Holland Synod express it, had "all the copies of the said book seized from all the book-shops of The Hague that very day".²⁷

Whether or not the reaction in the city of Utrecht was slower remains unclear. For the fact that, this time, there was a considerable delay before the publication of an edict banning Spinoza's posthumous works is, as we have seen, not proof that seizure of copies from the book-shops had not begun earlier. What is clear is that the delay in achieving a formal ban in Utrecht, on this occasion, resulted from

²⁵ Gemeentearchief Leiden, Acta kerkeraad VI, res. 4 Feb. 1678.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, res. 11 Feb. 1678; Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, p. 174-175.

²⁷ *Acta* V, ed. Knuttel, p. 236.

procedural difficulties. For several years the Synod of Utrecht had been endeavouring to persuade the full States of Utrecht to issue a provincial ban, like that published in Holland in 1674, prohibiting the *TTP*, Hobbes and Meyer, despite the fact that the *TTP* and the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* had already been forbidden by the Delegated States.²⁸ After the publication of *B.D.S. Opera Posthuma*, the Synod of Utrecht strove to have this incorporated in the same projected provincial ban. But the difficulties in the States (where a lack of co-operation between the city and *ridderschap* was only too familiar) continued and after it was reported at the gathering of the Synod, in September, that the delegates' efforts had still met with no success the Synod changed tack and now sought a published edict from the city alone "as such books are mostly sold in the city".²⁹ The burgomasters and magistracy responded promptly and this city edict was then published in October 1678.

It would seem that the purpose of this Utrecht decree of October 1678 was not to initiate any new ban, for most, if not all, of the books it cites were already officially forbidden in Utrecht, but rather to intensify suppression of the books cited and make clearer the principle underlying Utrecht's censorship policy. Thus, the edict sets out a general framework of intellectual censorship and should not, I would suggest, be seen as marking the commencement of the ban on Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* in the city. This Utrecht edict in order to "prevent all confusion, dissension and perplexity", forbade printers, book-sellers or anyone else to print, obtain from outside the province, distribute or sell "any Socinian or Arian books, these being blasphemous and wholly pernicious, and especially not the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* [whose author was still unknown], the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza, together with *B.D.S. Opera Posthuma*, and all similar material in whatever language it may be in".³⁰ That this placard was essentially a summing up and reinforcing of previous censorship policy is further evident from the stress, in the text, on tightening up the enforcement of book censorship. The edict stip-

²⁸ Rijksarchief in Utrecht, Provinciale kerkvergadering vol. 4, Acta 1676, sessio 4, art. 21 and Acta 1677, sessio 5, art. 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Acta 1678, sessio 5, art. 23.

³⁰ *Groot Placaat-Boek vervattende alle plaecaten [...] der Staten's lands van Utrecht*, ed. Joan Willem te Water (Utrecht, 1729), 3 vols., III, p. 432; reprinted in Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, p. 186-188.

ulates that all the printers and book-sellers of Utrecht had to appear in person before the magistrates within three days in order to give up "all printed or manuscript copies of such books [...] to be suppressed, kept or destroyed" by the city council as they saw fit. Any book dealer suspected of withholding, or concealing, copies of the books cited was to be made to take an oath before the magistrates, solemnly swearing that he had no copies concealed on pain of being fined one hundred guilders for the first refusal and being forbidden to sell books in Utrecht for a second.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this, I would argue, is that the banning of Spinoza's books by the Dutch secular authorities, from 1670 onwards, however incomplete and unsystematic, was by no means merely an empty formality which can safely be ignored by historians and students of Spinoza. It may be true that Spinoza's books, despite all these orders and edicts, were still bought and sold at any rate in the book-shops of Amsterdam and a few other main towns. But his books could not be advertised, hung up in shop windows as was then the practice with newly published works, openly discussed or, later, in the 1680's and 1690's, reviewed in the Dutch journals. Nor could Spinoza's books be cited or referred to approvingly in debate, academic discourse, or books. Furthermore, the censorship undoubtedly affected the way Spinoza himself planned his publications and thought about his work, forcing him to adopt an attitude of immense circumspection, and caution, and to resort to a variety of somewhat furtive ploys. If, as we see from his letters, the censorship which he confronted loomed rather large in his thoughts, this was by no means due to excessive timidity or paranoia. Arguably, Spinoza was being entirely realistic in his assessment of the difficulties he faced.

DISGUISED SPINOZISM IN ADRIAEN VERWER'S *MOMAENSICHT*¹

Gerrit Jongeneelen

Adriaen Verwer's *'t Momaensicht der Atheistery afgerukt door een verhandeling van den aengeboren stand der menschen...* (Atheism unmasked in an essay concerning the natural state of mankind) is generally considered a genuine refutation of Spinoza's philosophy.² It was published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1683, the year John Locke took up residence in the Republic, where his *Essay* was to be written. Its author, Adriaen Pietersz. Verwer (1654-1720), was born in Rotterdam in 1654 as the son of Pieter Adriaensz. Verwer, an Anabaptist deacon, who was involved in the Spinozism debates with Jacob Ostens (1630-1678) following the reception of Spinoza's philosophy in Rotterdam in the 1660's.³ In 1680 Verwer continued his trade activities in Amsterdam, where Spinozism had met with much less resistance among Anabaptists than in Rotterdam. Inspired by his new contacts and the Spinozism of his youth, Verwer decided to write the refutation of Spinoza's philosophy, that is published in *Momaensicht*.

The ideas developed in the *Momaensicht* turned out to be very influential during the 18th century. Adriaen Verwer's son, Pieter Adriaensz. Verwer (1696-1754),⁴ played an important part in Justus van Effen's (1684-1735) *Hollandsche Spectator* (1731-1735), in which the empiricism of John Locke was disseminated in a Spectatorial form. And Adriaen Verwer himself contributed, after publishing a grammar of the Dutch language (1707), to the linguistic education of Lambert ten Kate (1674-1731), who was to provide historical com-

¹ An earlier version of this paper has been read in the Enlightenment section at the Spinoza Congress on Freedom and Necessity, held at the former Karl Marx University, Leipzig 1992.

² Heine J. Siebrand, *Spinoza and the Netherlands. An Inquiry into the Early Reception of His Philosophy of Religion* (Assen-Maastricht, 1988), p. 57.

³ Cf. Louis van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg (1643-1691). Een Rotterdamse collegiant in de ban van Spinoza* (Rotterdam, 1990).

⁴ P.J. Buijnsters, *Justus van Effen (1684-1735). Leven en werk* (Utrecht, 1992), p. 273.

parative linguistics with its first scientific method by inventing the ablaut in strong verbs.⁵ Finally, Bernard Nieuwentijt's (1654-1718) refutation of Spinozism in *Gronden van zekerheid* (1720) is nothing other than a perfect repetition of the arguments Verwer had used to refute Spinozism in the *Momaensicht*. As it is certain⁶ that there were personal contacts between Verwer and Nieuwentijt in the 1690's, the thesis that the surprisingly modern 'logical empiricism' in *Gronden van zekerheid*⁷ was derived from *Momaensicht* does not seem to be too bold.

Therefore, there is more than enough reason to subject Verwer's *Momaensicht* to further examination in order to detect the Spinozism it refutes. 'Nieuwentijt's' doctrine on pure and applied mathematics is treated by Verwer in the "Preface on the Emendation of the Intellect" (Voorbericht om 't Verstand te suyveren van voor-oordelen). Using only the concepts 'real' (wesentlijk) and 'hypothetical' (voorondersteld), corresponding to *zakelijk* and *denkbeeldig* in *Gronden van zekerheid*, Verwer succeeds in finding the criteria for his epistemology. Real concepts, Verwer states (*Momaensicht*, p. 2), refer to things that really exist in the universe; as to hypothetical concepts no referent can be indicated. Pure mathematics is completely hypothetical; its concepts, however, can be made real by applying them in astronomy, mechanics, etc. Verwer's objection to Spinozism is the same as Nieuwentijt's. Spinoza's philosophy, depending entirely on the hypothetical grounds of mathematical reasoning, is devoid of any value for ethics and reality. The same applies to Cartesian inneism. Its refutation provides Verwer with the criterion for his empiricist epistemology: real knowledge does imply clear and distinct ideas, but clear and distinct ideas are no guarantee for the reality of knowledge, because hypothetical, non-contradictory reasoning can produce clear and distinct ideas as well (p. 4). In order to be able to produce real, i.e. non-hypothetical knowledge, the concepts in reasoning should correspond to the affections of things that really exist in the universe. Verwer's empiricist epistemology thus derives from his doctrine concerning pure and applied mathematics.

⁵ Cf. Gerrit H. Jongeneelen, "Lambert ten Kate and the Origin of 19th Century Historical Linguistics", in: *The History of Linguistics in the Low Countries*, ed. Jan Noordegraaf et al. (Amsterdam-Philadelphia, 1992), p. 253-271.

⁶ Rienk H. Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: Bernard Nieuwentijt* (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 17, 114.

⁷ Cf. E.W. Beth, "Nieuwentijt's Significance for the Philosophy of Science", *Synthese* 9 (1955), p. 447-453.

On the basis of this epistemology, a philosophy concerning psychology (natural state of man towards himself), politics (natural state of man towards his co-citizens) and religion (natural state of man towards God) (p. 16) is formulated in part one of the *Momaensicht*. It seems probable that this philosophy did not deviate much from the Spinozism that was current among Spinoza's pupils in the 1680's. After having moved from Rotterdam to Amsterdam in 1680 (p. **3v.) Verwer consulted Spinoza's intimate friends about the real intentions of Spinoza; in particular Johannes Bouwmeester (1630-1680), co-founder of the French Classicist Society 'Nil Volentibus Arduum' (1669)⁸ and correspondent of Spinoza on methodological matters.⁹ At the instigation of Spinoza, Bouwmeester had translated into Dutch the Latin translation of Abu Bakr Muhammed ibn Tufayl's (?1100-1185) *Philosophus autodidactus* (1671).¹⁰ Because of the contacts that evidently existed between Verwer and the reeditor (1701) of Bouwmeester's translation, Adriaan Reland (1676-1718), the addressee of Verwer's 1709 open letter on his linguistic theory, it seems probable that he took an active part in this reedition of Bouwmeester's translation, ascribed to Spinoza by the initials S.D.B. on its title page. Bouwmeester's translation is mentioned in the *Momaensicht* (p. 43-44) as an example of the possibility of obtaining complete philosophical knowledge without any instruction, only using the natural faculties of the mind. Traces of Ibn Tufayl's epistemological interpretation of Avicenna (980-1037) are present in Verwer's doctrine on natural reason as being able to obtain universal knowledge (eternal truths, or, metaphorically speaking, innate principles) (p. 22) without instruction or revelation. Verwer's definition of natural reason as the sum total of the eternal truths or universal knowledge, hidden in and derived from the created nature ('natura naturata'; p. 23), is both Spinozistic and Avicennian. Spinozistic as far as it starts from a concept of reason as idea¹¹ and Avi-

⁸ Cf. A.J.E. Harmsen, *Onderwijs in de tooneel-poëzy. De opvattingen over toneel in het Kunstgenootschap Nil Volentibus Arduum* (Rotterdam, 1989).

⁹ Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1972), 4 vols., IV, p. 187-189 (Letter 37).

¹⁰ Cf. Willem Meyer, "De consensu metaphysicae spinozanae cum philosophia arabica sive moslemica", *Chronicon Spinozanum* 2 (1922), p. 14-19 and Cay von Brockdorff, "Spinoza's Verhältnis zur Philosophie des Ibn Tophail", *Veröffentlichungen der Hobbes-Gesellschaft* 1932, p. 19-31. (Thanks to Winfried Schröder)

¹¹ Verwer, *Momaensicht*, p. 58: "Dat het niet anders is, dan een denkbeeld of

cennian as far as it only considers created nature as the source of the universal knowledge forming this natural reason.¹²

Both Avicenna and Calvinist theology¹³ may have been the sources of the Aristotelianism of Verwer's psychology. His attitude in respect of Spinoza, however, is not without ambiguity and is not as negative as the title of his pamphlet might make us expect. In part two of the *Momaensicht* only those Spinozist theses are rejected that are atheistic, for being based on autonomous and hypothetical reasoning. This is especially the case with Spinoza's theses on politics, based on the notion that in the natural state of mankind human rights are to be identified with power,¹⁴ implying that man is his own criterion of good and evil (p. 51-53), and with Spinoza's metaphysical epistemology that pretends to derive a complete knowledge of the universe from an a priori concept of substance, consisting of the two attributes extension and cogitation.¹⁵ Instead, Verwer derives his political philosophy from the natural law of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), basing civil society on a natural state of freedom and equality.¹⁶ Strictly speaking, his Renaissance theories of natural law and world culture are as hypothetical as the results of Spinoza's mathematical method they have replaced. Verwer adopts them in order to make world culture independent from human reasoning. In the lengthy preface of the *Momaensicht*, Spinozism is treated as a product of the degeneration often shown in history whenever the common ground of 'world culture', laid down in the Chaldaic period, is abandoned. The atheism and disorder in civil society, that then arise, are called 'independency' by Verwer.¹⁷

bevatting van eenig bysonder ding, dat inder daedt wesentlich in 't Heel-al is; van welk Denkbeeld het menschelijk, *en desgelijx ook alle ander lichaem* niet anders soude wesen dan een *voorwerp*." Cf. *ibid.*, p. 77-80 and *Ethics* II, prop. 11 and 13.

¹² Cf. Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysica of Avicenna (ibn Sina). A Critical Translation-Commentary and Analysis of the Fundamental Arguments...* (London, 1973); Gordon Leff, *Middeleeuwse wijsbegeerte* (Utrecht, 1967), p. 160: "Essences are *ante rem* in God and *post rem* in human intellect."

¹³ For Calvinist influence on cooperating conservative Anabaptists, cf. C.B. Hylkema, *Reformateurs. Geschiedkundige studiën over de godsdienstige bewegingen uit de nadagen onzer Gouden Eeuw* (Groningen-Amsterdam, 1978 (1900)), I, p. 185 ff. In Anthony J. Klijnsmit, "Spinoza en Verwer: een zeventiende-eeuws meningsverschil over de grondslagen van de wetenschap", in: *Accidentia. Taal- en letteroefeningen voor Jan Knol*, ed. Jan Noordegraaf & Roel Zemel (Amsterdam-Münster, 1991), p. 9-20, no attempt at a synthesis of Spinozism and Aristotelianism is made.

¹⁴ *Ethics* IV, prop. 37 schol. 2.

¹⁵ Cf. Verwer, *Momaensicht*, p. 53 and 60 on *Ethics* II, prop. 40, schol. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32: "vrijheid en evangelijkheid".

¹⁷ An example of Ancient independent political philosophy is Carneades (214/2-

With this concept of 'world culture' and 'independency', on which his politics and also his linguistics are based, Verwer reestablishes the relation between Enlightenment and Dutch Renaissance culture that was interrupted by the reception of Cartesianism and Spinozism, resulting in a synthesis of quantitative Cartesian mechanicism and qualitative Platonic notions of analogy and world culture ('Golden Age'). Spinozist theses, like those on politics, that necessarily presuppose independency are not acceptable for Verwer, but theses that are not contrary to Verwer's concept of world culture may be adapted to it (p. 69 and 74). His judgement on Spinoza's analysis of the passions is very positive (p. 83) and only Spinoza's thesis that the body is the only object of the mind¹⁸ is unacceptable in its egoistic consequences, inducing man to create circumstances most favourable for the perfection of the body in acting and being affected by the particulars in the universe.¹⁹

In Verwer's Aristotelian psychology the passive faculty of the mind (*Nous Pathêtikos*) is identified with the Spinozist concept of body as the object of the mind or the active faculty of the soul (*Nous Poiêtikos*). This Spinozist interpretation of Aristotelian psychology perfectly fits the empiricist criterion of Verwer's epistemology. As the body is the object of the mind, the affections in the passive faculty of the soul or the body represent the particulars of the universe, from which the concepts of real knowledge are to be derived. The possibility of direct revelation of knowledge to the active faculty of the soul as well as of deduction from a Spinozist concept of substance, is explicitly denied in the *Momaensicht* (p. 29 and 68). This results in a distinction between three kinds of knowledge, based on an empiricist interpretation of the parallelism of concepts and affections.²⁰

Firstly, eternal or universal knowledge,²¹ that will under all circumstances be detected in the same way by the human mind, applying its natural faculties to the affections in the body. *Secondly*, temporary experimental knowledge, that depends on actual verification

129/8 B.C.), contrasted with Cicero (106-43 B.C.) in Grotius' *De iure belli ac pacis*, Prol. 3; 5; 16. Cf. Wim N.A. Klever, *Carneades. Reconstructie en evaluatie van zijn kennis-theoretische positie* (Rotterdam, 1982).

¹⁸ Cf. note 11.

¹⁹ Verwer, *Momaensicht*, p. 61-62 and 73 (*Ethics* IV, prop. 38 and 39).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22 and 45-46. Cf. p. 58 and 81 on *Ethics* V, prop. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60 and 81 on *Ethics* II, prop. 38 cor.

of concepts against the affections. And *thirdly*, temporary historical knowledge for which verification of concepts against actual affections is no longer possible.

The concepts words stand for evidently belong to this third kind of knowledge, without any possibility of actual verification. Words only have general meaning.²² Verwer's definition of words as signs of remembered concepts reminds us of Spinoza's definition of meaning in the second book of the *Ethics*,²³ where the signification of a word was defined as the constant conjunction of two ideas: a sound and a concept. Having heard the sound *pomus*, the mind will remember the concept 'apple', usually conjoined with this sound. Spinoza adheres to a relativistic semantic theory. On the sound *horse* a soldier will think of war and a farmer of ploughing. In Verwer's *Idea* (1707) this semantic epistemology is developed into the theory of Enlightenment linguistics of Ten Kate and Balthasar Huydecoper (1695-1778). Because words only have general meaning, the concepts they stand for represent knowledge of the third kind without the possibility of verification against actual affections. The semantics of the 'Gemeenlands' (Koinè or Dutch standard) is to consist of real, i.e. non-hypothetical concepts, for which only language history can provide the corresponding affections.²⁴ The *Idea* combines this Spinozist semantic epistemology with a concept of language structure derived from Gerardus Joannes Vossius' (1577-1649) 'scientia grammaticalis', and the analogy concept of Grotius and Simon Stevin (1548-1620), discussed in the preface of *Momaensicht*. In the 'Gemeenlands' as theory of the hypothetical structure of language

²² Cf. John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A.D. Woozley (New York, 1974), book III, chapter I. In his criticism of paragraph 5 of this chapter in the *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*, Leibniz cites from Adriaan Koerbagh, *Een Bloemhof van allerley lieflykheid sonder verdriet...* (Leyden, 1668) without either mentioning its author or its title. Cf. Gerrit H. Jongeneelen, "La philosophie politique d'Adriaan Koerbagh", *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), p. 247-268 and "Adriaan Koerbagh: een voorloper van de Verlichting?", *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 5 (1994), p. 27-34. On Koerbagh, see also Ewoud Sanders, *Woorden van de duivel. Een bloemlezing uit het enige verboden Nederlandse woordenboek* (Utrecht, 1993).

²³ *Ethics* II, prop. 18, schol.

²⁴ Verwer had not yet elaborated this doctrine in all its consequences. He adhered to a Hobbist doctrine on semantics. Adriaan Verwer, *Lingua belgicae idea grammatica, poetica, rhetorica; deprompta ex adversariis Anonymi batavi: in usum proximi amici* (Amsterdam, 1707), p. 529: "Want zonder dat het de Hooge-Overigheid by ons doe, is onze tael gantsch onontfankelyk van veranderinge in't stuk van *Gebruik*: Zy is't alleene welke oppermogentlyk kan gebieden en ook doen gehoorzamen, dat het gene nu *tarwe* heet, morgen *rogge* moet heten;..."

('systema' or 'leest')²⁵ 18th-century linguistics is provided with an essentially Spinozistic methodology. Ontologically it is the substance or first mover of the dialects described in the anti-pantheistic metaphysics of chapter I of the *Momaensicht*.

In short, Verwer's refutation of Spinozism adapts Spinoza's philosophy to Renaissance conceptions of natural law and analogy. Only theses based on the autonomous reasoning of the mathematical method were rejected. By this adaption Verwer created an empiricist epistemology²⁶ that would be most fruitful for 18th-century linguistics and physicotheology.

²⁵ In the criticism of Arnold Moonen's (1644-1711) *Nederduitsche spraekkunst...* (Amsterdam, 1706) in his open letter to Adriaen Reland (*Brief aen den Heere Adriaen Reeland...* (Utrecht, 1709; also published in D. van Hoogstraten, *Lijst der gebrukelykste zelfstandige naemwoorden betekent door hunne geslachten...* (Amsterdam, 1733), p. 464-465) Verwer contrasts his scientific linguistic method with the hypothetical linguistics of Moonen: "Ende als ik'er mynen grond zal byzeggen, stelle ik vaster als vast, dat zyn E. zig hier verzeilt op een gantsche averegtsche bake; te weten dat alle tegenspraak nietwes anders in heeft, dan dat hy de tael der Overzettinge ["Verwer's norm", G.J.] niet vind te passen op de leest van het private *secterytje*, 't welk Joost van den Vondel zig zelve in zyn eigen geschryf tot een bloote *hypothesis* schynt verkooren gehad te hebben jaren en dagen, na dat het tael-bestek der Overzetters al was geklonken: waer over hier na breeder. Ondertuschen hebmen te weten dat die *leest* het eenige onderwerp maar uitmaakt, ofte den Staet van ons heele Geschil." Cf. L. Peeters, "Historiografische problemen van het Vroegnieuw-nederlands", in: *idem*, *Taalopbouw als renaissance-ideaal. Studies over taalopvattingen en taalpraktijken in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw*, ed. G.R.W. Dibbets *et al.* (Amsterdam 1989), p. 150 for Vossius' influence—over Chr. van Heule (?-1655)—on Verwer's norm.

²⁶ Verwer's empiricism is discussed in the letters between P.H. and H.W. in the second part of Johannes Duijkerius, *Het Leven van Philopater en Vervolg van 't leven van Philopater*, ed. Gerardine Maréchal (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 199-206, that have a central position in the argument in Hubertus G. Hubbeling, "A Dutch Materialistic Interpretation of Spinoza in the Seventeenth Century", in: *Spinoza nel 350 anniversario della nascita. Atti del congresso*, ed. Emilia Giancotti (Napoli, 1985), p. 489-514. Spinoza's empiricism is also stressed in Cornelis de Deugd, *The Significance of Spinoza's First Kind of Knowledge* (Assen, 1966). (Thanks to Wiep van Bunge).

BEKKER AND SPINOZA

Andrew Fix

In the controversy that arose in 1692 over Balthasar Bekker's treatment of the temporal activities of spirits in his book *The World Bewitched*, a number of Bekker's opponents, most notably the Amsterdam Reformed minister Jacobus Koelman, accused Bekker of advocating Spinozism. According to Koelman, among the many things wrong with Bekker's book was that his "new ideas expressed in *The World Bewitched* have a lot in common with atheists, Sadducees, Epicureans, Libertines, and other Scripture despisers, and especially with Thomas Hobbes, Benedict Spinoza, Adrian Koerbach, David Joris, and the like."¹

That this was no idle criticism has been shown by Wiep van Bunge in an important article in *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* in 1993, where he demonstrates how close Bekker's biblical hermeneutics were to those of Spinoza, especially in the way both used the so-called doctrine of accommodation.² In addition to these exegetical similarities, the two men shared a similar position on the activities of spirits, although they argued their cases quite differently. But despite these similarities, which were quite rightly pointed out by Bekker's opponents, the actual relationships between the ideas of Bekker and Spinoza on spirits and on biblical exegesis were complex, and in the end the differences between their positions may tell us more, at least about Bekker's intellectual position, than the similarities.

Bekker's public position on Spinoza's ideas is well known. In his 1685 continuation of George Hornius's ecclesiastical history, which Bekker wrote at the request of the Rotterdam bookseller Balthasar Boeckholt after Hornius's death prematurely terminated the work at the year 1666, Bekker related a meeting that he had had with

¹ Jacobus Koelman, *Wederlegging van Balthasar Bekker's Betoverde Wereld: Het Eerste Deel...* (Amsterdam, 1692), p. 118.

² Wiep van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics and the Challenge of Spinozism," *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1 (1993), p. 55-79.

Spinoza in The Hague during which Spinoza had admitted to being the author of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. In discussing Spinoza's ideas, Bekker accused him of violating the Dutch Cartesian principle of the separation of religion from philosophy by making philosophy the "master of things of belief."³ He called Spinoza's philosophy "absurd," and listed his chief "errors" as the ideas

That there is no substance, that is, independent entity, outside God; and that creatures are but modes, that is ways [wijzen] of God's existence. 2) That this one substance has two essential characteristics: extension and thought. And there are infinite others that we do not know. 3) That all depends on an infinite number of causes, following each other in an infinite order and in infinite ways. 4) That no thing or deed is in itself good or bad. 5) That the Holy Scripture was not originally from God and that the holy writers erred in much. 6) That miracles are caused by and can be explained by natural causes.⁴

According to Koelman, Bekker was only using his criticism of Spinoza to provide cover for his own irreligious ideas. Koelman claimed that Bekker's method of biblical interpretation, like Spinoza's, functioned chiefly to hide heretical ideas behind elaborate language.⁵ It seems to me, however, that it is more productive to take Bekker's criticisms of Spinoza seriously, especially in light of the fact that the two did have important ideas in common. In this regard it is interesting to note, especially in light of Bekker's position on Cartesian dualism to be outlined below, that Bekker's first two objections against Spinoza's ideas focussed on Spinoza's monism. That Bekker considered these two points as the primary areas of disagreement between himself and Spinoza might be indicated by his placement of them at the head of the list of errors. There seems to be little other reason that they should be listed first, as these ideas came from the *Ethics*, which was of course published after the *Tractatus*, from which other ideas on the list were taken. Furthermore, in a work of church history one might well have expected Bekker to list first Spinoza's errors of biblical interpretation, but these come last in the list, perhaps because Bekker's own exegetical position was not far different on some crucial points. Especially with regard to objection number five concerning Spinoza's claim that the

³ Balthasar Bekker, *Kort Begryp der Algemeine Kerkelyke Historien, Zedert het Jaar 1666 daar Hornius eindigt, tot den Jare 1684* (Amsterdam, 1739), p. 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵ Van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics", p. 74.

biblical writers had erred, Bekker's position closely approached Spinoza's. Nevertheless, the differences that ultimately remained between their positions are important and instructive.

Bekker's most important work was, of course, his argument against the temporal activity of evil spirits in volume two of *The World Bewitched*. The most controversial parts of this argument were based on Cartesian dualism and on biblical exegesis similar to Spinoza's. Bekker followed Descartes by defining spirit as a substance entirely distinct from body: "By spirit I mean a being that is immaterial and has not the least thing in common with a body," he wrote.⁶ A spirit has no community of nature or essence with a body, since the essential characteristic of spirit is thought while that of body is extension.⁷

On earth the spirit that man is most familiar with is the human soul, Bekker wrote, and thus he began his examination of spirits with the soul. The soul is essentially distinct from the human body and exists independently from the body, but God has united body and soul in man in such a way that the soul can act on the body and the body on the soul. It is not really possible to understand how these two essentially distinct substances interact, Bekker admitted, but it is clear that such interaction is not in the nature of either body or soul. It is entirely dependent on God.⁸

Aside from the human soul, Bekker continued, reason cannot prove that any other spirits exist on earth. Again borrowing from Descartes, Bekker argued that reason cannot prove that angels exist because, unlike God's essence, an angel's essence does not include any necessity of its existence. Since reason cannot prove *a priori* the existence of angels, Bekker continued, angels could only be proved to exist from their actions. But even such actions cannot definitively prove that angels exist because actions supposedly done by angels could also have been done by human souls returning to earth after the death of their bodies. On the other hand, Bekker continued, even if the true actions of angels were never observed, this would not prove that angels do not exist. An infinite number of creatures are unknown to man, so it does not follow that if there were angels or other spirits on earth man would know about them.⁹ In fact,

⁶ Balthasar Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld* (Deventer, 1739) vol. II, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24-29, 43-49.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33-39.

Bekker concluded, reason alone could neither prove nor disprove the existence of angels on earth.

Bekker went on to point out, however, that Christians followed the Bible in believing that spirits other than the human soul did indeed exist on earth. They followed the Bible as well in calling these spirits “angels,” a word whose Hebrew and Greek originals meant “messenger.”¹⁰ Thus, despite the fact that reason was inconclusive on the matter, Bekker accepted the existence of angels on the authority of Scripture. But how could such a spirit without a body act on other spirits and especially on bodies?, Bekker asked. The human soul acted on its body only by a special arrangement of God, and it could not act on any other body except by means of its own body. “Our soul has its own body, without the help of which it cannot act on another body,” Bekker argued, “but how can an angel, who never had a body, do this?”¹¹ Bekker thus concluded that, according to reason, spirits without bodies (as angels were defined in traditional theology from Augustine to Aquinas) could not act immediately on bodily creatures such as man.¹²

When Scripture revealed the existence of both good and bad angels, however, it clearly indicated that good angels did act on people on earth, Bekker continued. The Bible did not give much information about the origin and nature of angels, but it did say that they were divided into good and bad spirits. All angels were created good by God, and a part thereafter became bad and fell from heaven. Good angels were God’s servants and messengers, while bad angels caused the fall of man. On points such as these, where the Bible seemed clear, Bekker indicated that Christians should accept scriptural accounts despite the fact that reason could offer no support for them.

Unfortunately, many biblical accounts of the actions of spirits were far from clear, Bekker argued, and thus it was often difficult to know what Scripture meant in these places. Because the original words for “angel” (*angelos* in Greek, *Malach* in Hebrew) meant “messenger,” the Greek word for “devil” (*diabolos*) meant “slanderer,” and the Hebrew word “Satan” meant “opponent,” the Bible sometimes used these terms to describe the actions of people who were mes-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9-10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 43-49.

sengers, slanderers, or opponents of God.¹³ For this reason, Bekker argued, it was difficult to distinguish passages in which these terms referred to spirits from those in which they referred to people. Still, in various other places the Bible did clearly ascribe to good angels actions directed toward people on earth, and Christians therefore believed such actions to occur even though reason could not explain or verify them.

But the Bible did not ascribe such actions to bad angels or devils, Bekker argued. In fact, in several places Scripture made it clear that such actions did not take place. In II Peter 2:4 the apostle said that Satan and his bad angels were thrown by God into hell and chained there to await the Last Judgement. Genesis 49:26 said that the bonds holding the devil were eternal. If the devil and his demons were prisoners in hell, how could they act on people on earth? Bekker asked. The Bible often spoke of bad people who plagued believers on earth, he continued, but it never clearly ascribed such actions to evil spirits.¹⁴ On this point Scripture and reason seemed to agree: evil spirits did not act on people on earth.¹⁵

Bekker repeatedly criticized the official States Translation of the Bible when it dealt with angels and devils. The original Greek and Hebrew words could be and often were used in the Bible to refer not to spirits but to men fulfilling the functions of messenger or opponent, but the translators, because they believed in the earthly activities of good and evil spirits, almost always rendered the original words not as men but as angels and devils, that is, as spirits:

...the translators of the Bible into Dutch have always believed in angels and devils and thus they have put crowds of angels and devils in the Bible where the original Greek and Hebrew do not indicate any. Often these passages really much more clearly refer to men than spirits.¹⁶

Bekker's concern for the meaning of the original language of the Bible and how that meaning had been altered by translators who read into the biblical text their own preconceived opinions mirrored Spinoza's comments on scriptural interpretation in chapters six and seven of the *Tractatus*. Discussing biblical accounts of miracles, Spin-

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 49-53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53-62.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63-77.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

oza said that Scripture did not seek to explain the secondary causes of the things it discussed, and that sometimes biblical accounts were “related according to the opinion and prejudices of the writer.” Because people rarely relate any event “without adding any element of their own judgement,” Spinoza continued, in order to interpret scriptural miracles and understand from the narration of them how they really happened “it is necessary to know the opinions of those who first related them, and have recorded them for us in writing...”¹⁷

Spinoza went on to argue that the first rule of scriptural interpretation was “to accept nothing as an authoritative scriptural statement which we do not perceive very clearly when we examine it in the light of its history.” By the “history” of a biblical passage Spinoza meant first of all “the nature and properties of the language in which the books of the Bible were written and in which their authors were accustomed to speak.” Secondly each book of the Bible was to be analyzed and its contents arranged by subject, with special note being made of those passages that were obscure or contradictory. The clarity of a biblical passage was to be established solely on the basis of the signification of its words, leaving aside any judgement by reason on the truth of the passage because the purpose of exegesis was only to establish the meaning of the Bible, not its truth. Finally, study of the Bible’s meaning had to include a knowledge of “the life, conduct, and studies of the author of each book, who he was, what was the occasion and epoch of his writing, whom did he write for, and in what language”, as well as a knowledge of the history of each book after its composition and how it came to be included in the Bible.¹⁸

Similarities appear between Bekker and Spinoza in their concern for biblical language and the influence on the text of the opinions of its writers. But there is an obvious and crucial difference between their positions that changes the entire picture: while Spinoza questioned the meaning of the original authors of the biblical text and examined it through the language used, Bekker questioned not the meaning of the original text but the later Dutch translation of it. Bekker pointed out that the same original words could refer to either spirits or people, and that while the original text often made clear

¹⁷ Benedict Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*. Translated by R.H.M. Elwes (New York, 1951), p. 91-93.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100-103.

which meaning was intended, there were some passages that were difficult to interpret precisely because it was not clear from the context whether spirits or people were meant.¹⁹ The real fault, however, Bekker placed with the States translators who distorted texts based on their own ideas; he did not suggest any distortion, intentional or unintentional, by the original authors of the text. Unlike Spinoza, Bekker believed the Bible to be in its entirety a divinely inspired and thus infallible document. In chapter eighteen of book two of *The World Bewitched* he laid out four rules of scriptural interpretation for use in dealing with difficult passages. In first place among these rules was the assumption that "Scripture always speaks truly and to the honor of God. It often uses well-disguised reasons, but it never ascribes anything absurd to God, who is himself its author."²⁰ Again unlike Spinoza, Bekker held that Scripture did have the object of conveying to man knowledge, although not natural knowledge. Thus the *truth* of its content, and not just its meaning, mattered.

These differences narrowed considerably but were still apparent in the ways in which Bekker and Spinoza applied the doctrine of accommodation. The idea that God accommodated his revelation in Scripture to the limited understanding of the men who received it went back at least as far as the thirteenth century, and by the seventeenth century Cartesian theologians were using it to explain apparent contradictions between the biblical text and the new mechanical philosophy.²¹ This of course raised questions about the accuracy of the Bible when it described natural phenomena, leading to questions about whether the Bible was even intended to teach man about nature. Such questions in turn tended to promote the Dutch Cartesian principle of the separation of theology from philosophy, and even led ultimately to questions about the truth content of Scripture. This last issue was addressed by both Bekker and Spinoza and highlighted both the similarities and the differences in their approaches to Scripture.

The principle of accommodation had long been used to tackle difficult theological questions such as the creation of the angels, which

¹⁹ For example see Bekker's treatment of Psalm 104:4 in vol. II, p. 52.

²⁰ Bekker, *De Betoverde Wereld*, p. 119

²¹ Basil Wiley, *The Seventeenth Century Background* (London, 1934), p. 66; Van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics", p. 65-66.

Bekker wrestled with as well. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin himself had resorted to it for this purpose:

Because, though Moses, in the history of creation, accommodating himself to the ignorance of the common people, mentions no other works of God than such as are visible to our eyes, yet, when he afterwards introduces angels as ministers of God, we may easily conclude, that he is their creator, whom they obey, and in whose service they are employed.²²

In the *Tractatus* Spinoza took this doctrine much farther. He held that biblical stories of miracles, which he considered extraordinary natural occurrences, were adapted to the judgement and understanding both of the authors who related them and the audience for whom the stories were intended, as well as to the particular purpose of the biblical text. Likewise, biblical revelations were adapted to the opinions of the prophets who delivered them. Taking the same principle even farther, Spinoza claimed that the object of Scripture was not to teach either natural or supernatural truth, but simply to command obedience and piety in man. Thus:

Scripture does not explain things by their secondary causes, but only narrates them in the order and style which has the most power to move men, and especially uneducated men, to devotion; and therefore it speaks inaccurately of God and of events, seeing that its object is not to convince the reason, but to attack and lay hold of the imagination.²³

Spinoza thus made the extraordinary claim that the writers of the Bible had made mistakes, because for Spinoza the truth content of Scripture was irrelevant, or in fact nonexistent. The Bible was essentially a rhetorical text. In discussing biblical prophecy Spinoza wrote "Thus to suppose that knowledge can be gained from the prophetic books is an utter mistake....," and he continued:

...prophecy varied according to the opinions held by the prophets; for instance, to the Magi, who believed in the follies of astrology, the birth of Christ was revealed through the vision of a star in the east. To the augurs of Nebuchadnezzar the destruction of Jerusalem was revealed through entrails, whereas the king himself inferred it from oracles and the direction of arrows which he shot into the air. To prophets who believed that man acts from free choice and by his own

²² John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Ford Lewis Battle (Philadelphia, 1960), p. 180.

²³ Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, p. 91.

power, God was revealed as standing apart from and ignorant of future human actions.²⁴

Between the two extremes of Calvin and Spinoza Bekker occupied a kind of middle ground in his use of accommodation theory. While he was closer to Spinoza than to Calvin, differences remained in the way Bekker and Spinoza viewed the truth content of the Bible. Bekker showed that using the doctrine of accommodation required de-emphasizing the role of the Bible as teaching true knowledge to man, and like Spinoza he stressed instead its role as a moral guide. But Bekker did not claim that mistakes were made by biblical authors in conceiving of and relating divine prophecy, as Spinoza did, nor did he claim that the Bible was essentially a rhetorical text without truth content. Instead Bekker merely emphasized Christ's use of the language of the common people to enable them to understand his moral message, with the consequence that he often left them in factual error. The big difference here was that Bekker did not claim that Christ himself erred in his message to his people.

After having argued in chapter twenty-seven of *The World Bewitched* that people whom the Bible said were possessed by demons were really mentally ill, Bekker then proceeded in chapter twenty-eight to discuss those scriptural passages where Christ himself seemed to indicate that evil spirits did indeed possess people. First of all Bekker made it clear that it was not Christ's purpose to teach people about natural phenomena because he was essentially a moral teacher: "...our Lord, when he walked upon the earth, never let it appear in his teachings that he had come to teach men the natural causes of things: nor the errors in the conception of things, but only to better those things pertaining to morals and religion."²⁵ And just as Christ's moral teaching excluded him from teaching about natural things, it also meant that he did not teach doctrine or "the things of belief," Bekker continued. The only religious doctrines that Christ taught were the simple ones that he was the promised messiah and about the resurrection, and he taught these only in a very few passages. "There are no special chapters on belief—such as about the creation, and especially of angels, about election, or justification, or hereditary sin, or even satisfaction," Bekker wrote. Some of these things were spoken of here and there in the Bible, but only in pass-

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁵ Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld*, p. 197.

ing and never sufficiently to provide “a full and complete treatment of any doctrine.” These doctrines had to be gotten from elsewhere, he added.²⁶

But Bekker did not see the entire Bible as devoid of doctrinal teachings and thus truth content. Christ saw it as his purpose to reveal himself in his actions and teachings, and “what further pertained to doctrine he left to his disciples to do after his ascension,” when he would send down to them the Holy Spirit to enlighten their understandings and make them capable of understanding doctrines that they would not have been able to understand before, even if Christ had wanted to teach them.²⁷ Thus Bekker stressed that Christ was only a moral teacher, but he did not expand this view to include the apostles, prophets, and the entire Bible as Spinoza did.

Since Christ was much more concerned with moral life than with doctrine, “it is not surprising that Jesus did not declare himself against various errors that were in fashion at that time among the Jewish people, not even when a specific opportunity to do so presented itself to him, and his silence seemed to be silent agreement,” Bekker wrote.²⁸ Not only did Christ not correct people who spoke of spirit possession, he left people in other errors as well. To the question “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” he did not answer that it had nothing to do with doing anything. He said only “Uphold the commandments” (Matt. 19:16-17, Luke 10:25-28), not mentioning man’s inborn corruption that made this impossible, Bekker wrote. Christ did not correct people even when they erred grossly concerning his own person, not believing that he as the Messiah was true God and of the same substance as God, but believing him only a Godly man and great prophet (Luke 24:19). Only after he went to heaven and sent down the Holy Spirit did the Lord correct this error. “...So you can easily see that his goal was not to save men from their errors [...] indeed he himself made use of errors to silence his opponents with their own words,” Bekker continued, approaching closely only this one time Spinoza’s claim that the Bible not only tolerated but indeed taught errors.²⁹

“You can see then clearly enough,” Bekker continued, that the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 198-199.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 200-203.

style of great masters has been not only to leave people in errors [...] but also to accommodate themselves to that language which in part arose out of such misunderstanding (...ook sich na de taal te voegen, die uit sulk misverstand onstond.)³⁰ Christ had good reasons for doing this. "The people were rough and uncivilized, and ruled by old ideas," and it was easier to convince them of the corruption of their morals than of the falsity of their ideas, Bekker continued, adding that Christ thus first taught them "the things most proper to virtue and the exercise of life, with as much knowledge as was required for this..."³¹ In a similar vein Spinoza wrote "...that Scripture teaches only very simple doctrines, such as suffice for right conduct."³² Bekker, however, added that after receiving Christ's moral teaching peoples' hearts would be pious and they would then be ready to "pay more attention and more industriously to investigate the knowledge of more Godly things" when the disciples taught these.³³

So the Lord "did not intend to explain the right truth of things," and could not speak other than the way most men spoke if he wanted to be understood. He gave the sick the names that they had among the people—he said they were possessed by spirits—because these names would strike no one as strange and the people would know to whom and to which sicknesses he was referring. But, Bekker insisted, by using the common name for sicknesses Christ did not indicate that he himself shared the error the name embodied—that he believed in spirit possession.³⁴

Bekker's use of the doctrine of accommodation resembled that of Spinoza so closely that one is led to suspect that Bekker might have been influenced by Spinoza's discussion in the *Tractatus*. According to Bekker's own account he had questioned Spinoza at least about his authorship of the work during their meeting in The Hague, and his interest might well have extended farther. But differences between their positions remained. While Spinoza said that Scripture "speaks inaccurately of God and of events", Bekker did not say that Christ himself had erred in using popular language, only that he had not corrected the errors of the people. The most fundamental differ-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

³² Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, p. 175.

³³ Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld*, p. 205.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205-206.

ence was in their conceptions of the Bible: while Bekker held that Christ adapted his message to the language of the common people in order to be understood, Spinoza argued that biblical revelation was adapted not only to the language of the people who received it but also to the opinions and prejudices of the prophets who delivered it. Thus for Spinoza revelation was adapted to human intelligence, and thus often mistaken, not only in the form that it was related to the people but in the very form in which it was conceived by the prophets. It was mistaken in its very conception. While Bekker assured his readers that Christ himself was never mistaken—he never agreed with the errors that he failed to correct and which were present in the language that he used—Spinoza held that the prophets themselves had been mistaken “about God and events” when this suited their rhetorical purposes (although Spinoza made a distinction between Christ himself and the other prophets, holding that Christ alone “communed with God mind to mind” and thus received divine revelation without the use of human imagination and thus, presumably, without the distortion of the divine message that was produced by the intervention of human understanding. Thus he seems to have agreed with Bekker that Christ himself had not been mistaken³⁵). Therein lies the difference in the way Bekker and Spinoza saw Scripture: for one its message was inspired and infallible, but for the other it was not always so.

This point can be further illustrated by the different ways in which Bekker and Spinoza used the question of the movement of the sun as an example of the application of the method of accommodation. Bekker discussed Matthew 5:45 where Christ said that God made the sun go up. The sun neither went up nor down the way the common people believed, Bekker argued, nor could it be said to go up and down with respect to the horizon because the horizon had no real existence outside human perception. It was not that the sun went up or down, but that the appearance of the sun did this. “But if the Lord had said either the one or the other in a literal way, how would the people have known what he meant?” Bekker asked.³⁶

Spinoza discussed the Old Testament story of the battle of the five kings:

In the time of Joshua the Hebrews held the ordinary opinion that the

³⁵ Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, p. 19.

³⁶ Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld*, p. 205.

sun moves with a daily motion and that the earth remains at rest; to this preconceived opinion they adapted the miracle during the battle with the five kings. They did not simply relate that the day was longer, but they said that the sun and moon stood still, or ceased their motion—a statement that was also of much service to them at the time in convincing and proving by experience to the gentiles, who worshipped the sun, that the sun was under the control of another deity who could compel it to change its daily course. Thus partly through religious motives, partly through preconceived opinions, they conceived of and related the occurrence as something quite different from what really happened.³⁷

No matter how closely Bekker followed Spinoza in exegetical method, the difference between the two men always came down to what Spinoza found to be one of the primary mistakes made by many biblical exegetes: these people decided “beforehand, as a foundation of the study and true interpretation of Scripture, the principle that it is in every passage true and divine. Such a doctrine should be reached only after strict scrutiny and thorough comprehension of the Sacred Books [...] and not be set up on the threshold, as it were, of inquiry.”³⁸ That Bekker was guilty of this crime there can be little doubt, and he too realized that this was the fundamental theological difference between himself and Spinoza when in objection number five in the *Ecclesiastical History* he rejected Spinoza’s view “that the Holy Scripture was not originally from God and that the holy writers erred in much.”³⁹ Of the six objections that Bekker made to Spinoza’s ideas, this was one of only two taken from the *Tractatus*. Indeed, as we have seen, Bekker found much to like in that work, but he certainly could never carry its principles as far as Spinoza did.

Was Koelman correct to see Bekker as an advocate of Spinozism? Although he did not go as far as Spinoza, he did use Spinoza’s exegetical methods for his own attack on spirit belief. But why did he not also use Spinoza’s more specific approach in arguing against spirit belief? Spinoza put forward his views on spirits in an exchange of letters with Hugo Boxel in 1674.

On 14 September 1674 Boxel wrote to Spinoza asking for his opinions on “apparitions and ghosts or specters—if you believe they

³⁷ Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, p. 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁹ Bekker, *Kort Begryp*, p. 39.

exist, what you think about them, and how long their life lasts. Are they mortal or immortal?"⁴⁰ Boxel added that the ancients believed in them and modern theologians and philosophers agreed that some such creatures existed, but disagreed on their nature. Because so many stories about them were found in antiquity Boxel found it hard to doubt their existence, he wrote.⁴¹

Spinoza replied from The Hague that he had never read a "trust-worthy author" who clearly showed that spirits existed, and that as a consequence he did not know what they were, and nobody had ever been able to tell him. But what he had heard about spirits seemed "better suited to the silly, children, and fools than to the wise." Stories of spirits showed men's desires to narrate things as they wished that they happened rather than as they actually happened, and such stories were only attested to by the narrators who fashioned them as they pleased to justify their own fears or to confirm their courage, Spinoza wrote.⁴²

On 21 September Boxel wrote back giving reasons that he believed in spirits: 1) it was part of the beauty and perfection of the universe that they should exist (an argument similar to one of Aquinas's arguments for the existence of angels); 2) it was probable that God created them because they were more like him than bodily creatures; 3) because body existed without soul, so must soul exist without body; 4) they were needed to fill the upper regions of the air (another medieval argument); 5) daily experience showed that they existed; and, 6) many ancient and modern writers said they existed.⁴³

Spinoza refuted these arguments one by one and managed to put the burden of proof entirely on Boxel to show that spirits existed, rather than on himself to show that they did not exist. They were not necessary for the beauty of the universe because beauty was not an affect of an object but was in the eye of the beholder. Things in themselves were neither beautiful nor ugly. Why were spirits closer to God's image than bodily creatures? he asked. Between infinite and finite there is no comparison, so there is as much difference

⁴⁰ Letter 55 of Spinoza's correspondence, in: Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding, the Ethics, Correspondence*. Translated by R.H.M. Elwes (New York, 1955), p. 375.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 375-376.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Letter 56, p. 376-377.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Letter 57, p. 378-379.

between God and the most excellent creature as there is between God and the worst creature. If soul can exist without body because body can exist without soul, did this mean that memory, hearing, and sight could exist without bodies because bodies existed without them? Since the universe was infinite there were no upper regions of the air. And all people who reflected on the human imagination and emotions had to laugh at the stories of spirits related by ancient writers, just as Suetonius reported that Julius Caesar did, Spinoza added. And Spinoza concluded: "If I had as clear an idea of ghosts as I have of a triangle or a circle, I should not hesitate to affirm that they were created by God. But the idea that I have of ghosts is just like the idea I have of harpies, gryphons, hydras, etc. So I cannot consider them anything but dreams."⁴⁴

To this *tour de force* Boxel replied that absolute proof of the existence of angels, as of many other things, was not obtainable, but that people still believed in things that could not be finally proved. A ghost could not be conceived as clearly as a triangle, he said, and then he asked Spinoza if his idea of God was as clear as his idea of a triangle.⁴⁵

Spinoza replied that while people did do many things by conjecture, their reflections could not be so based. "In philosophy we must take care not to admit as true anything that is only probable..." and he went on to say that Boxel's conjecture about spirits did not even seem probable. He added that his idea of God was as clear as his idea of a triangle, but that he did not have as clear a mental image of God as of a triangle. This was because even though people could understand God by understanding some of his attributes they could not imagine him. But Spinoza said that he had never heard anyone attribute to spirits any intelligible properties, so that they seemed phantoms that nobody understood.⁴⁶

No further reply of Boxel to Spinoza is known, and it is likely that he made none. Indeed, Boxel had a much more difficult time refuting Spinoza's critique of spirit belief than Bekker's opponents had with his arguments. Immediately after the publication of the second volume of *The World Bewitched* a huge controversy broke out over

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter 58, p. 381-384.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter 59, p. 384-385.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter 60, p. 386-388.

Bekker's arguments, with numerous lengthy refutations aimed especially at his use of Cartesian dualism.

While Koelman and other Reformed critics charged that by using dualism to argue against the temporal activity of spirits Bekker was placing human reason above the testimony of Scripture, even a number of Cartesians argued against Bekker's view of spirits. As Koelman noted: "...even though he has built on Cartesian grounds and premises, his Cartesian brothers do not thank him for advancing so far in that philosophy. They reject his construction and deny his conclusion. They are mad at him..."⁴⁷ Indeed, several Cartesian writers argued that dualism did not after all make it impossible for spirits to act on bodies because this could happen through a miracle of God. As I have shown elsewhere, these writers adopted a form of the occasionalism developed by Nicholas Malebranche and his Dutch follower Arnold Guelincx to resolve the serious epistemological problems within Cartesianism posed by dualism and pointed out in 1673 by the French sceptic Simon Foucher.⁴⁸ His opponents' use of occasionalism to uphold traditional beliefs about the activity of spirits was specifically rejected by Bekker in a section of *The World Bewitched* (II:10 in the 1739 Deventer edition) that he added later, and he ended by upholding an unmodified version of Cartesian dualism to reject the temporal activity of spirits despite the problems that this left for Cartesian epistemology.⁴⁹

The position that Bekker tacitly adopted in the Cartesian controversy over dualism might help to explain why the first two objections that Bekker made against Spinoza's ideas in the *Ecclesiastical History* dealt with his monism. Spinoza eliminated epistemological and other problems posed by Cartesian dualism simply by collapsing the two substances into one, squarely in the face of much of western philosophical tradition. But just as Bekker explicitly rejected the occasionalistic solution to these problems he also rejected monism.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Koelman, *Wederlegging*, p. 390.

⁴⁸ See Andrew Fix, "Balthasar Bekker and the Crisis of Cartesianism", *History of European Ideas* 17 (1993), p. 575-588; Richard Watson, *The Downfall of Cartesian Metaphysics* (Atlantic Highlands, New York, 1987).

⁴⁹ See Balthasar Bekker, *Brief van Balthasar Bekker S.T.D. en Predikant tot Amsterdam aan twee eerwaardige predikanten, D. Johannes Aalstius tot Hoornaar ende D. Paulus Steenwinkel tot Schelluinen over derselver Zedige Aanmerkingen op een deel des tweeden Boex van sijn werk genaamd De Betoverde Wereld* (Amsterdam, 1693).

⁵⁰ See Van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics", p. 69.

In his rejection of the occasionalistic approach to spirit/body interaction in *The World Bewitched* Bekker made it clear that he objected to the way this solution broke down the barrier between religion and philosophy that he and other Dutch Cartesians held sacred. "We must not refer to miracles when the question is what nature can do, and when creatures are considered according to the nature that God has created in them..." he wrote.⁵¹ Likewise, Bekker's first negative comment about Spinoza in the *Ecclesiastical History* was that he made philosophy the "master of things of belief."⁵² So Bekker retained traditional Cartesian dualism both as a weapon against spirit belief and because he felt that Spinoza's philosophy as well as occasionalism mixed two realms that had to be kept separate.

As a weapon against spirit belief Bekker's dualism could be judged to have been somewhat less than completely successful, considering the furious opposition that it aroused on all sides. In retrospect, Spinoza's arguments against spirits based largely on the application to that question of the Cartesian epistemological criterion of clarity and distinction seems far more effective, and it certainly worked against Boxel. Some years ago Richard Popkin pointed out in a seminal article that the major danger posed by Cartesianism for the traditional European religious worldview was not metaphysical dualism or even the mechanical conception of the universe, but rather the application of the Cartesian criterion for true scientific and philosophical knowledge to religious knowledge claims.⁵³ This certainly seems to have been the case if one evaluates the arguments of Bekker and Spinoza against spirits.

Spinoza's critique of spirit belief was more effective than Bekker's because by applying the Cartesian criterion for rational truth it shifted a burden of proof that was very heavy indeed onto the shoulders of those who, like Boxel, believed in spirits. This solution was far too radical for a thinker like Bekker because of the implications it held for belief in good spirits as well as the evil ones that Bekker wanted banned from the world, and also because of the implications of this approach for many other claims of religion. Spinoza's methods of biblical exegesis were much more to Bekker's liking as a tool to be used against spirit belief. Once again, however, Bekker was unwill-

⁵¹ Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld*, p. 44.

⁵² Bekker, *Kort Begryp*, p. 39.

⁵³ Richard Popkin, "Cartesianism and Biblical Criticism", in: *Problems of Cartesianism*, ed. Thomas M. Lennon *et al.* (Kingston, 1982), p. 61-81.

ing to take these methods to the ultimate conclusion that Spinoza did in denying the inspired and infallible nature of Scripture.

Despite Koelman's charge that Bekker advocated Spinozism, Bekker's list of objections to Spinoza's ideas in the *Ecclesiastical History* turns out to pretty accurately reflect his agreements and disagreements with the great philosopher. Monism and determinism topped the list, with biblical exegesis appearing near the end and focussing on Spinoza's claim that the Bible contained errors. Bekker was certainly no Spinozist, but he recognized the power of Spinoza's exegetical methods as well as the dangers posed by Spinoza's philosophy for the traditional religious worldview if the boundaries between religion and philosophy were broken down.

ERIC WALTEN (1663-1697): AN EARLY ENLIGHTENMENT RADICAL IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

Wiep van Bunge

In the Dutch Republic in particular, the early history of Spinozism is, as we all know, intimately connected with the history of Cartesianism. In fact, Louise Thijssen-Schoute's famous *Nederlands cartesianisme* was specifically intended to pave the way for a future *Nederlands spinozisme*, a book that has sadly to this day been left unwritten.¹ Equally familiar will be the fact that the greatest row over Cartesianism in the Dutch Republic was triggered off by the publication in March 1691 of the first two parts of Balthasar Bekker's *De Betoverde Weereld*²—*The World Bewitch'd* as the English translation has it—and that this Reformed minister would in August 1692, already be removed from his post in Amsterdam.³

Less well known, however, is the fate of the most ardent supporter of Bekker, one Eric Walten, who on account of his extremely aggressive defence of Bekker was prosecuted for blasphemy and who died in jail in 1697 while awaiting trial. Since Bekker's all-out attack on what he considered to be superstitions concerning witch-

¹ See A.G.H. Bachrach, "Een levensbericht", in: C.L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Uit de Republiek der Letteren. Elf studiën op het gebied der ideeëngeschiedenis van de Gouden Eeuw* ('s Gravenhage, 1967), p. viii-xi; C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme* (Utrecht, 1989; 1st ed. 1954).

² Balthasar Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld, Zynde een Grondig Onderzoek Van 't gemeen gevoelen aangaande de Geesten, derselver Aart en Vermogen, Bewind en Bedryf: als ook 't gene de Menschen door derselver kragt en gemeenschap doen* (Amsterdam, 1691).

³ See W.P.C. Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker. De bestrijder van het bijgeloof* (Groningen, 1979 (1906)); J.J.V.M. de Vet, *Pieter Rabus (1669-1704). Een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse Verlichting* (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1980), p. 220-331. Some recent articles on Bekker are: Robin Attfield, "Balthasar Bekker and the Decline of the Witch Craze; the Old Demonology and the New Cosmology", *Annals of Science* 42 (1985), p. 383-395; Andrew Fix, "Angels, Devils and Evil Spirits in Seventeenth-Century Thought: Balthasar Bekker and the Collegiants", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (1989), p. 527-547 and "Balthasar Bekker and the Crisis of Cartesianism", *History of European Ideas* 17 (1993), p. 575-588; Wiep van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics and the Challenge of Spinozism", *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1 (1993), p. 55-79. In September 1994, the "Fryske Akademy" held a seminar on Bekker. The proceedings will be published in the journal of the Frisian Academy: *It beaken* 57 (1995).

craft, sorcery, and Satanic intervention inspired several of his opponents to brand him a Spinozist in disguise, and since Walten frankly admitted to being far more radical than Bekker, it would seem only logical that Walten, too, was held to be a Spinozist.

Yet, despite the ferocity of Walten's writings, the large majority of the many dozens of pamphlets and books that appeared over *De Betoverde Weereld* dealt almost exclusively with Balthasar Bekker. Walten was rarely mentioned. However, as soon as he was, the tone immediately sharpened. Jacobus Koelman, for instance, the ultra-orthodox minister who was convinced of an international philosophical conspiracy against the Reformed creed, without much ado called Walten an "atheistic blasphemer".⁴ Indeed, one 'Iiritiel Leetosoneus' repeatedly suggested that Walten was, in fact, a Spinozist.⁵ Then, again, caution is due as far as this particular pamphlet is concerned, for its author, who was proud to call himself a Cartesian, also argued that Bekker was no Cartesian at all, and that neither for that matter was Descartes. (Descartes had remained a Catholic, and Catholics could not possibly be Cartesians. Neither could Mennonites, Socinians, Remonstrants, Atheists, and Libertines. Cartesians by necessity were members of the Dutch Reformed Church.)⁶

Before we go on to assess these contemporary verdicts that dramatically resulted in Walten's capture and death, we shall first try to sketch his biography.⁷ Who was Eric Walten? Of his youth nothing is known except what he told his prosecutors in 1694, namely that he was born in 1663 in the German village of Ham,⁸ although his

⁴ Jacobus Koelman, *Schriftmatige Leere der Geesten, soo der Goede als insonderheid der Quade...* (Utrecht, 1695), p. 868; cf. p. 876.

⁵ Iiritiel Leetosoneus, *Den Swadder, die E.W. op Cartesianen en Coccejanen geworpen heeft, in zijn twe Deelen van Aardige Duyvelarye Zuiver af-gevaagt...* (Amsterdam, 1692), p. 12 and 20-21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15-17.

⁷ See W.P.C. Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", *Bijdragen voor vaderlandse geschiedenis en oudheidkunde*. Vierde reeks, eerste deel 1900, 345-455. This article is largely based on a careful examination of what could perhaps be called *the Walten-papers*, kept in the *Rijksarchief* in The Hague: *Voorlopige inventaris van het archief van het Hof van Holland*, nr. 5366, dossier 14. With two important exceptions that will be dealt with at the end of the present paper, Knuttel seems to have covered this *dossier*. After our conference took place, Willem Frijhoff kindly called my attention to a *second* entry in the Hof van Holland inventory, nr. 374, which refers to two of Walten's personal notebooks. Since November 13 1990, however, these notebooks have been listed by the Algemeen Rijksarchief as missing.

⁸ Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", p. 346.

apparent familiarity with political events in England, and, more importantly, his expertise as an English translator, seem to indicate a British background.⁹ We do know for certain that in 1685 he was banned from Utrecht, being condemned for vagabondage and begging. From 1688 onwards he lived in The Hague, although in 1690 he stayed for a short while in nearby Rotterdam. He styled himself a Doctor in Theology, Philosophy, and Law, but seems to have made a living as a physician, as well as through his writings and the medals he designed.

We are, of course, mainly interested in his pamphlets. These can be broadly divided into four groups. In 1688 he took up the cause of William III against James II and showed himself to be a staunch defender of popular sovereignty and the elective nature of monarchy.¹⁰ Next, he turned to the question of the civil rights of governments over the church,¹¹ and to two local disputes, one concerning

⁹ Knuttel nowhere mentions Walten's contribution to the publication of (the second part of) what by its modern editor has been called one of the most important pilot books in history: Arent Roggeveen's *The Fourth Part of the new great Sea-Mirrou; discovering the West-Coast of Africa [...]* Newly Collected and published by Jacobus Robbyn, and fore its use fulnesse and Excellence Translated into the English Tongue, by Ericus Walten (Amsterdam [Printed, ingraven, and sould by Jacob Robbyn, Print- and Map-seller. Cum Privilegio], 1687). This was the second part of *The Burning Fen*, which is so eminently important if only because it was the first printed pilot book of non-European coasts. The original edition of *Het Eerste Deel van het Brandende Veen*, which dealt with the coastlines of America, was published in 1675. *Het Tweede Deel* dates (probably) from 1685. The title page of *The First Part of the Burning Fen...* does not refer to any translator. Cf. Arent Roggeveen & Pieter Goos, *The Burning Fen—First Part, Amsterdam 1675* / Arent Roggeveen & Jacob Robbijn, *The Burning Fen—Second Part, Amsterdam 1687*, ed. C. Koeman (Amsterdam, 1971), 2 vols. Interestingly, Knuttel's first guess was that Walten was an Englishman: *Catalogus van de pamfletten berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek. Tweede Deel. Tweede Stuk, 1668-1688* ('s Gravenhage, 1895), p. 438. See also note 10.

¹⁰ See E.W., *Wederlegginge van het Schend-Schrift...* (Keulen, 1688); [Eric Walten ?] *Weederlegging Van het geschrift van een Persoon...* (S.l., 1688); [Eric Walten ?] *Weerklank op de uitvlugtige antwoord...* (S.l., 1688); *Verantwoordinge van Dr. Gilbert Burnet... Uit het Engels Vertaalt door E.W. (!)* (S.l., 1688); Ericus Walten, *De Regtsinnige Policey...* ('s Gravenhage 1689); [Eric Walten], *Mirakel der Mirakelen...* (S.l., 1688); Ericus Walten, *De Nieu-Modische Getuigen...* (S.l., 1689). Some of these pamphlets are discussed in H. W. Blom, "Our Prince is King! The Impact of the Glorious Revolution on Political Debate in the Dutch Republic", *Parliaments, Estates & Representation* 10 (1990), p. 45-58. The catalogue of the British Library lists two separate German translations of *De Nieu-Modische Getuigen*: *Die Alamodische (?) Zeugen...* (Londen [sic], 1689) and *Die neu-modische Zeugen [...]* *Aus dem Englischen übersetzt*. ([Hamburg ?], 1689). I have not, however, found any reference to an English version of this pamphlet.

¹¹ See Ericus Walten, *Onwederleggelyk Bewijs van het Regt, de Magt en Pligt der Overheden in Kerkelijke Saken...* ('s Gravenhage, 1689); Ericus Walten, *Portrait van*

the privileges of the regents of Amsterdam,¹² the other the Rotterdam tax upheavals of 1690.¹³ Since we are here mainly interested in assessing Walten's relationship to Spinoza, we shall concentrate on the last pamphlets he wrote—in defence of Balthasar Bekker's *De Betoverde Weereld*.

The first two parts of this book appeared in 1691, the third and fourth parts following two years later, by which time Bekker had already fallen victim to the *furor theologicus* of Calvinist orthodoxy. The core of Bekker's reasoning in *De Betoverde Weereld* is relatively simple. Bekker's stance boils down to a highly efficient combination of Cartesian dualism with a hermeneutics that centred around the notion of divine accommodation. Hence he was able to argue that it was metaphysically *impossible* for spirits to act on bodies, and exegetically *unnecessary* to accept any causal connection between spirits and bodies: Satan was incarcerated in hell, angels and demons were powerless as regards the material world, and the biblical stories in which angels, devils and sorcerers do occur should be understood strictly allegorically. Bekker's dualism, of course, could not possibly be confused with Spinoza's metaphysics, but the way in which Bekker used the ancient notion of *accommodatio ad captum vulgi* was widely held to be just as suspicious as Spinoza's exegetics.¹⁴

De Betoverde Weereld was an immediate best-seller. Thousands of copies were sold within months of its publication, and it would later be translated into English, French, and twice into German.¹⁵ Meanwhile, within weeks of its publication, a procedure was started to have this book banned. Eric Walten immediately took issue with Bekker's orthodox detractors, ridiculing their apparent incompe-

Jacobus Koelman... ('s Gravenhage, 1689); Ericus Walten, *Onwederlegglyk Bewys [...]* *Het Tweede Deel* ('s Gravenhage, 1691).

¹² It is unclear which pamphlets in this particular row were written by Walten and which by his friends Govert Bidloo and Romeijn de Hooghe, the famous engraver. See Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", p. 359-383.

¹³ A.M. [=Eric Walten] *Waerachtigh Verhael Van 't gepasseerde te Rotterdam...* (Rotterdam, 1690); [Eric Walten] *Tweede Deel Van het Waerachtigh Verhael...* (Rotterdam, 1690); *Remonstrantie van Mr. Ericus Walten...* (S.l., 1692).

¹⁴ See Van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics" and "Van Velthuysen, Batelier and Bredenburg on Spinoza's Interpretation of the Scriptures", in: *The Spinozistic Heresy...*, ed. Paolo Cristofolini (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1995; forthcoming).

¹⁵ Jacobus Koelman, *Neerlandts Ondergang, Gedreigt en Naby, Vertoont in een Predikatie over Jesa. 9 vers 12-16* (Utrecht, 1692), p. 51 and 69, complained that Bekker was even more dangerous than Hobbes and Spinoza, precisely because *De Betoverde Weereld* was so widely read.

tence in grasping Bekker's arguments.¹⁶ (Walten relates how, for example, at a provincial synod in August 1691, Bekker was challenged to a debate over his views on the supernatural with the famous Leiden professor Jacob Trigland, on which occasion the latter seems to have made something of a fool of himself.) When it turned out that Walten's interference did not make much difference, he tried to give the affair a political twist by publishing, in June of 1692, an open letter to Bentinck, the Earl of Portland, whom he warned of the Calvinist campaign to suppress the tolerant politics Walten was sure the King of England would not wish to see abolished.¹⁷

Again Walten only succeeded in aggravating the situation for Bekker, who in August 1692 was effectively deposed as minister, which in turn triggered Walten to publish his final pamphlet on the matter in which he cried out that the synods of the Dutch Reformed Church had turned into a lunatic asylum, "*een Sottenhuys, of Gasthuys van de Gekken*".¹⁸ This went too far, or so it would seem, for in November 1693 a joint appeal was made by the deputies of the synods of North and South Holland to the Court of Holland to have Eric Walten prosecuted for blasphemy. Although the examinations of Walten, as we shall see, are an excellent source for some of the views he held, let us first leaf through his pamphlets on Bekker.

Compared to Bekker, Walten does indeed seem prepared to go beyond *De Betoverde Weereld* in at least two respects. To begin with, Walten showed a remarkable lack of reverence for the professional competence of theologians. Since the 1650's the Cartesian faction in the Dutch Republic had made good use of the fundamental difference which they felt had been established between the realms of theology and philosophy. In fact, Spinoza himself had invoked this very Cartesian tradition in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, arguing for example that the *moral* truths that theology is able to provide have nothing in common with the *mathematical* truths of philosophy.¹⁹

¹⁶ [Eric Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary; Voorvallende in dese dagen. Begrepen in een Brief van een Heer te Amsterdam, geschreven aan een van zijn Vrienden te Leeuwarden, in Vriesland* (S.l., s.a. [=1691]); [Eric Walten] *Vervolg Van de Aardige Duyvelary*,... (Rotterdam, 1691); [Eric Walten] *Brief Aan een Regent der stad Amsterdam*,... ('s Gravenhage, 1692).

¹⁷ Eric Walten, *Brief Aan zijn Excellentie, de Heer Graaf van Portland, &c. &c. Rakende de Persoon en het gevoelen van Dr. B. Bekker*,... ('s Gravenhage, 1692).

¹⁸ [Eric Walten] *Den Triumheerenden Duyvel. Spookende omtrent den Berg van Parnassus*,... (Middelburg, 1692), p. 16 ff.

¹⁹ See Ernst Bizer, "Die reformierte Orthodoxie und der Cartesianismus",

Walten now made it abundantly clear that once we have established the validity of this 'categorical' separation of philosophy from theology, we should be prepared to draw the consequences.

To Walten, this meant that the question of "the nature, the powers and the effects of spirits in general, and of devils in particular" should be considered to be strictly metaphysical.²⁰ To put it differently: the Bible does not instruct us on the nature of things, so a scriptural physics, let alone a scriptural metaphysics, is impossible. On the contrary, without a fundamentally and necessarily secular (meta-)physics we will never be able to understand the Bible to begin with.²¹ For, understanding any text presupposes at least some knowledge of the subject of the text. No text on angels can carry any meaning for anyone who does not know what an angel actually is, i.e. what constitutes the angelic nature. Since Cartesian dualism conveys the most fundamental metaphysical truth we possess, and since it precludes any causal connection between spiritual and corporeal natures, no *story* can possibly convince us of angelic or demonic intervention.

In an earlier pamphlet, Walten had already shown what conclusion should be drawn from this insight: "if God were to decide that a stone should walk or talk, that a horse should fly, or that an ant should carry a camel, He would be forced to alter the nature of these creatures".²² Consequently, these stones, horses and ants would no longer be what they were and their behaviour would therefore no longer be miraculous. Similarly, once an angel—a purely spiritual nature—was able to affect bodies, it would stop being an angel. According to Walten, it would be "criminal" to suppose anything like that, since it would contradict "the innate light of God, i.e. Reason" and because "God is a God of order, not of confusion [*verwerringe*]"²³

As well as a firm grasp of Cartesian physics and metaphysics, any reader of the Bible should possess the scholarly qualifications neces-

Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 55 (1958), p. 306-372; Klaus Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert* (München, 1966), p. 131-170; Paul Dibon, "Scepticisme et orthodoxie réformée dans la Hollande du Siècle d'Or", in: *idem, Regards sur la Hollande du Siècle d'Or* (Napoli, 1990), p. 721-757.

²⁰ Walten, *Brief Aan zijn Excellentie*, p. 78-80.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20-22.

²² [Walten] *Brief Aan een Regent*, p. 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 26-27.

sary to deal with the peculiarities of the specific *linguistic culture* that produced the Bible. Anyone who has seriously studied the Scriptures, Walten repeatedly argued, recognizes that one needs a profound knowledge of the customs and the expressions of the people who wrote this particular book, for they frequently *accommodated* their message to the limited capacities of their first audience. What is more, these authors themselves often adapted their stories to the errors to which their original public had become accustomed.²⁴ Compared to Bekker, it is especially the vigour with which Walten argues for the separation of philosophy and theology and the need to read the Bible allegorically that is increased, as is chiefly apparent from his comments on the Fall. Bekker had been forced to admit that he could not make sense of the biblical account of this event, whereas Walten simply pointed out that, since the devil could not possibly have had anything to do with it, it must have been Eve's deliberate intention to sin that caused her and her husband to leave the Garden of Eden.²⁵

On the whole, Walten's main interest seems to have been to oppose the political ambitions of the Calvinist orthodoxy. (According to one recent commentator, the entire hermeneutical debate over Cartesianism was mainly a political struggle.²⁶) His pamphlets are packed with allegations against and downright insults to the Calvinist clergy of the Dutch Republic. His main target was, of course, the Voetian party that had orchestrated Bekker's downfall, but Walten also accused the Coccejan faction, for not supporting Bekker enough. He suspected the followers of Coccejus of having still been angry over Bekker's commentary on *Daniel*, in which Bekker had indeed attacked the eccentric reading of *Daniel* which Coccejus had come up with.²⁷

²⁴ [Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 27. Cf. Walten, *Brief Aan zijn Excellentie*, p. 19-20.

²⁵ Cf. Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld*, II, p. 108-118; [Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 18-19; Walten, *Brief Aan zijn Excellentie*, p. 18-20, 59-62. Interestingly, Walten appears to have owned a copy of Adriaan Beverland, *Dissertatio de Peccato Originali...* (S.l., 1679; first published anonymously in 1678) See Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", p. 440; Willem Elias, "Het spinozistisch erotisme van Adriaan Beverland", *Tijdschrift voor de studie van de Verlichting* 2 (1974), p. 288-320. On examination, Walten declared that the Fall was due to Adam wanting to have sex: Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", p. 436-437. As far as Spinoza's treatment of the Fall is concerned, see, apart from his correspondence with Willem van Blyenbergh: *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Translated by Samuel Shirley (Leiden, 1989), p. 106-109.

²⁶ Rienk H. Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: Bernard Nieuwentijt* (Amsterdam, 1991), esp. p. 89-112.

²⁷ See Balthasar Bekker, *Uitlegginge Van den Propheet Daniel* (Amsterdam, 1688);

Indeed, at one point Walten even tried to formulate something like an Art of Mocking: he felt compelled to mock his opponents, the case of the Voetians being so eminently ridiculous. He saw it as his duty to mock, for "mockery itself is never wrong, it is only the matter that is being mocked which makes mockery good or bad"²⁸ And on he went, for in his second pamphlet on the Bekker affair he argued at great length that the ministers who were making such a noise over *De Betoverde Weereld* were lazy duffers who felt threatened now that the general public was able to judge for itself over the intricacies of the Reformed creed. They would no doubt have preferred Bekker to publish in Latin, which would have given them the opportunity to plunder his work and dish up Bekker's findings in their sermons as the product of their own efforts. But Walten must have felt that, now that they had decided to keep pestering Bekker, the time had come to reveal what they really were, namely worshippers of the Devil, Satanists. In fact, the attempt to dethrone God and to inaugurate Satan as supreme majesty closely resembled the heinous efforts of the Jacobites.²⁹

It seems to have been this particular insult that in November 1693 led the Reformed authorities to request the Court of Holland to have Walten prosecuted. On March 19th 1694 Walten was arrested in The Hague. For three years he waited in vain for the lawsuit to commence. After several desperate pleas from Walten to the judicial authorities to get on with his case, he died in his cell sometime in 1697, arguably by suicide.

Walten's arrest appears to have been due mainly to the continuing stream of insults hurled at the Reformed clergy of his day. Seventeenth-century pamphleteers were, indeed, very rude but Walten was in a class of his own: our churches, Walten wrote, are

Walten, *Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 9, cf. [Walten] *Vervolg Van de Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 10; Wiep van Bunge, "Balthasar Bekker on *Daniel*. An Early Enlightenment Critique of Millenarianism", *History of European Ideas* 21 (1995; forthcoming). For a recent account of the controversy between Voetians and Coccejans, see Ernestine van der Wall, "Orthodoxy and Scepticism in the Early Dutch Enlightenment", in: *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Richard H. Popkin & Arjo Vanderjagt (Leiden, 1993), p. 121-141. See also: *Een richtingenstrijd in de Gereformeerde Kerk: voetianen en coccejanen 1650-1750*, ed. F.G.M. Broeyer & E.G.E. van der Wall (Zoetermeer, 1994).

²⁸ [Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 24.

²⁹ [Walten] *Vervolg Van de Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 36 ff. and *Brief Aan zijn Excellentie, passim*. Cf. Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", p. 405-406.

filled with incompetent dunces;³⁰ my opponents write like drunkards,³¹ and are certified idiots, driven by the spirit of the Anti-Christ.³² Walten's contempt for the clergy was matched only by his scorn for the "mob", (the "schorry morry"³³): "it is a known fact", he stated, "that the most stupid rabble is always most zealous for God and Country"—"just as the smallest pots boil the quickest, so the dullest minds get feverish the most easily."³⁴

By now it will be clear that it is very hard to consider Walten a Spinozist *stricto sensu*, if only for his commitment to Cartesian dualism. Still, his writings are reminiscent of at least two prominent members of what ever since Meinsma has been known as Spinoza's 'circle'.³⁵ I mean, of course, Lodewijk Meyer and Adriaan Koerbagh. As far as Meyer is concerned, Walten's firm conviction that the Scriptures cannot begin to make sense for anyone not familiar with the principles of Cartesian (meta-)physics definitely hints at approval of Meyer's *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* of 1666.³⁶ Indeed, at one stage Walten boldly declared that only recently, thanks to "the light of a clear philosophy", had the study of the Bible started to make any progress.³⁷ The fact that the Voetians were generally mistaken in their assumption that *all* Cartesians were followers of Meyer in disguise does not exclude the possibility that *some* radical 'Cartesians' actually were.

As far as Koerbagh is concerned, we should first note that Bekker had already been accused of being a follower of the author of *Een Bloemhof* (A Flower-Bed), a dictionary published in 1668 and packed with Socinian and Spinozan comments.³⁸ In Bekker's case, this accu-

³⁰ [Walten] *Brief Aan een Regent*, p. 50.

³¹ Walten, *Onwederleggelyk Bewys*, p. 23 ff.

³² Walten, *Onwederleggelyk Bewys [...] Het Tweede Deel*, p. 59-60.

³³ [Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 40.

³⁴ [Walten] *Waerachtig Verhael*, p. 20.

³⁵ K.O. Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring. Historisch-kritische studiën over Hollandsche vrijegeesten* (Utrecht, 1980 (1896)).

³⁶ For a recent translation, see J. Lagrée & P.-F. Moreau, *Louis Meyer, La philosophie interprète de l'Écriture Sainte* (Paris, 1988).

³⁷ [Walten] *Vervolg Van de Aardige Duyvelary*, p. 5. Time and again, Jacobus Koelman, in particular, argued that *all* variants of Cartesianism led to Meyer's stance. Cf. Johannes Molinaeus, *De betoverde Werelt van D. Balthazar Bekker [...] Onderzocht en Wederleydt...* (Rotterdam, 1692), p. 15 ff; J. Verryn, *Aenmerkingen op de Betoverde Werelt...* (Amsterdam, 1692).

³⁸ *Verscheide Gedichten, So voor, als tegen het Boek, Genaamt: de betoverde Weereld...* (S.l., 1691), p. (7); Jacobus Koelman, *Wederlegging, van B. Bekkers Betoverde Wereldt, Het Eerste Deel...* (Amsterdam, 1692), p. 137. For Koerbagh see Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn*

sation seems to have been rather gratuitous, but Walten's disgust with the 'average' Dutch Reformed clergyman does sound like an echo of Koerbagh's. Take, for instance, Koerbagh's comments on "Dominee" in his *Bloemhof*: clergymen call themselves "dominees" solely because the Latin word for "sir" is supposed to impress the common man. And this is Koerbagh at his friendliest. There is more, much more: Koerbagh's explanation of "Duyvel", for instance, and of "Engelen", "Fascinatie", "Gereformeerde Religie", "Magie", "Mirakel", "Propheet", "Satan", and "Visioen". The word "duyvel" is nothing but a poor translation of the Greek *diabolos*, meaning "slanderer"; similarly "engelen" derives from *aggeloi*, "messengers"; "fascinatie"—"enchantment"—is always fake; our "Gereformeerde religie" does not deserve its name for it is still a long way from being purified into a reasonable religion; "magie" is Persian and merely means "wisdom"; a "mirakel" is supposed to be something that occurs against or above nature, which is impossible; a "propheet" is always obscure, most often a liar, sometimes just lucky; "Satan" means "opponent", no more; and a "visioen"—an "apparation"—is nothing but a product of the imagination.³⁹

In short, a generation before Bekker and Walten, all belief in supernatural intervention had already been violently ridiculed as being the product of vulgar superstitions and poor translations of the Bible. (And Koerbagh, of course, had also been arrested.) That these similarities do hint at a real affinity is further suggested by a highly curious passage in the last of Walten's political pamphlets. Walten suddenly embarks on a discussion of whether Joshua was a prophet. According to Walten he was not. Soon, Walten added, I shall prove this, just as I shall prove "that Moses, Joshua and Samuel never saw, let alone wrote, the books that carry their names. And I will do so without diminishing the authority and divinity of these books in a concise *Critique* of Holy Writ, which I shall publish soon after the publication of this *Tweede Deel* under the title a *Bloemhof der Leer-*

kring, p. 272 ff; Hubert Vandenbossche, *Spinozisme en kritiek bij Koerbagh* (Brussel, s.a.) and *Adriaan Koerbagh en Spinoza* (Leiden, 1978); Gerrit H. Jongeneelen, "An Unknown Pamphlet of Adriaan Koerbagh", *Studia Spinozana* 3 (1987), p. 405-415 and "La philosophie politique d'Adrien Koerbagh", *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), p. 247-267.

³⁹ Adriaan Koerbagh, *Een Bloemhof van allerley lieflijkheid sonder verdriet geplant...* (Amsterdam, 1668), p. 258-258, 268-269, 303, 327-328, 414-415, 447, 527-528, 670, 647.

begerigen, of een Sleutel voor Theoloogs-gesinde Philosophen, en Philosophes-gesinde Theologanten, om alle beide met vrugt en vermaak Gods Woord te lesen, en door het openen van eenige tot nog toe geslotene deuren, de strydigheden, die er tusschen de Theologie en de Philosophie schynen te zijn, weg te nemen".⁴⁰

To all intents and purposes this would seem to imply that Walten, just before he got involved with the polemics about *De Betoverde Weereld*, was about to publish a sequel to Koerbagh's *Bloemhof* that would lean heavily on the eighth chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, "in which it is shown that the Pentateuch and the Books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel and Kings were not written by themselves..."⁴¹ In two of his pamphlets on Bekker, Walten confirmed this project, announcing the imminent publication of "een groot Tractaat"⁴² that he had been working on since well before the publication of *De Betoverde Weereld*, and that would definitively put an end to a host of metaphysical and exegetical misunderstandings.⁴³

Thus, it is only to be expected that Walten's interrogators were particularly interested in his views on the Scriptures, and that the transcripts of his examination hardly deal with what Walten had actually written and published. Indeed, his prosecutors had found a copiously annotated Bible in Walten's possession and a number of personal notebooks, two of which seem to have been preserved. Sadly, this potential gold-mine is now no longer available.⁴⁴ The prosecution also collected a vast amount of rumours concerning Walten's blasphemous behaviour. Some of his statements can be directly traced to *De Betoverde Weereld* and will not have upset his interrogators: Jacob's quarrel with God, Walten declared, must have been part of a prophetic fantasy or a dream.⁴⁵ Others must have been quite shocking.

From his examination, we learn, for instance, that the accused insisted that Christ was the offspring of a bastard (Perez), who in turn was the result of the incestuous relationship between Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38; Matth. 1:3; Luke 3:33).⁴⁶ And, that David, a

⁴⁰ [Walten] *Onwederleggelyk Bewys [...] Het Tweede Deel*, p. 66.

⁴¹ Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, p. 161.

⁴² [Walten] *Den Triumpheerenden Duyvel*, p. 12.

⁴³ Walten, *Brief Aan zijn Excellentie*, p. 62; cf. p. 80.

⁴⁴ See note 7.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bekker, *De Betoverde Weereld*, II. p. 62.

⁴⁶ Cf. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, p. 174.

syphilitic, Isaiah, a known drunkard and fornicator, and Jeremiah regularly made fools of themselves, especially Isaiah when he prematurely prophesied the death of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1-11; cf. Isaiah 18:1-8). Next, Walten denied all allegations concerning his comments on Job, since he felt that Job had never existed.⁴⁷ One of the witnesses summed it all up in his statement that Walten had told him "that in the past he had believed what was told in church, but that nowadays he only believed what agreed with reason".⁴⁸

In conclusion, I should like to suggest that even though it would seem very hazardous indeed to consider Walten a Spinozist, he might perhaps be looked upon as, say, a latter-day member of Spinoza's 'circle'. In most accounts of the history of seventeenth-century Dutch Spinozism, it has become customary to concentrate on a very specific tradition of religiously inspired authors like Jarig Jelles, Pieter Balling, Johannes Bredenburg, Willem Deurhoff, Frederik van Leenhoff and Pontiaan van Hattem.⁴⁹ There are, however, traces of an alternative 'school', more closely associated with the inheritance of Koerbagh and Meyer, of which Walten may well have been a member, together with Adriaan Beverland, Johannes Duijkerius, Anthony van Dale, and, perhaps, Hendrik Weyermars (not to be confused with that other *franc-tireur*, Jacob Campo Weyerman).⁵⁰

Both in France and to some extent in Germany, traces of early Spinozism have mainly been found among the proponents of radical Bible criticism and emerging materialism. It is quite clear that Spinozism was one of the main inspirations for the authors and the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁴⁸ See Knuttel, "Ericus Walten", p. 430-440.

⁴⁹ See for instance Johannes Severijn, *Spinoza en de gereformeerde theologie van zijn tijd* (Utrecht, 1919); Hubertus G. Hubbeling, "Zur frühen Spinozarezeption in den Niederlanden", in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. Karlfried Gründer & Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (Heidelberg, 1984), p. 149-180; Michael John Petry, "Behmenism and Spinozism in the Religious Culture of the Netherlands, 1660-1730", in: *ibid.*, p. 83-114; Heine J. Siebrand, *Spinoza and the Netherlands. An Inquiry into the Early Reception of his Philosophy of Religion* (Assen-Maastricht, 1988).

⁵⁰ See notes 25 and 38; Johannes Duijkerius, *Het Leven van Philopater en Vervolg van 't leven van Philopater*, ed. Gerardine Maréchal (Amsterdam, 1991); M.R. Wielema, "Een onbekende aanhanger van Spinoza: Antony van Dalen (1644-na 1690)", *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 4 (1993), p. 23-40; Hubert Vandenbossche, "Hendrik Weyermars' *Ingebeelde Chaos* (1710): een *Tractatus de Emendatione Spinozae*", *Tijdschrift voor de studie van de Verlichting* 2 (1974), p. 321-369; and, most importantly, Antony McKenna's contribution to the present volume.

copyists of the clandestine literary culture in France.⁵¹ For a long time, the seeming absence in Dutch culture of a similarly radical tradition does not seem to have been a matter of great concern to historians of Dutch intellectual history. Perhaps this had something to do with the prevailing image of the Dutch Enlightenment as a rather tame, and basically still Christian, culture, very much orientated towards the promotion of a compromise between science—including philosophy—and religion.

For some time now, this image has been called into question by several prominent historians. Margaret Jacob has over the last few years tried to unearth a well-organised Dutch Radical Enlightenment, based mainly in the masonic lodges of the Dutch Republic.⁵² Silvia Berti has proved that probably the most famous clandestine manuscript of the time, the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, relies heavily not only on Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, but more especially on (the appendix to) the first book of the *Ethics*, to which she added the extremely exciting suggestion that the author of this infamous text may well have been a Dutchman, one Jan Vroesen.⁵³

This would seem to lend a particular poignancy to the report of one of the witnesses interrogated by the Court of Holland. Walten was supposedly trying to get hold of "a booklet entitled *de tribus impostoribus*".⁵⁴ Two other witnesses accused Walten of having declared

⁵¹ See for instance Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1982 (1954)); *Le matérialisme du XVIII^e siècle et la littérature clandestine*, ed. Olivier Bloch (Paris, 1982); *Spinoza au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Olivier Bloch (Paris, 1990); Winfried Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* (Würzburg, 1987) and "Spinoza im Untergrund. Zur Rezeption seines Werkes in der *littérature clandestine*", in: *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte*, ed. A. Delf et al. (Berlin, 1994), p. 141-161; Wiep van Bunge, "Clandestiene cultuur in Nederlands perspectief", *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 5 (1994), p. 35-44.

⁵² See Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment. Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London, 1981); "Radicalism in the Dutch Enlightenment", in: *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century. Decline, Enlightenment, and Revolution*, ed. Margaret C. Jacob & Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (Ithaca-London, 1992), p. 224-240; *Living the Enlightenment. Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York, 1991).

⁵³ Silvia Berti, "The First Edition of the *Traité des trois imposteurs* and its Debt to Spinoza", in: *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Hunter & David Wootton (Oxford, 1992), p. 182-220; "Jan Vroesen, autore del *Traité des trois imposteurs*?", *Rivista storica italiana* 103 (1991), p. 528-543; *Trattato dei tre impostori. La vita e lo spirito del Signor Benedetto de Spinoza*, ed. Silvia Berti (Torino 1994).

⁵⁴ Algemeen Rijksarchief, *Voorlopige inventaris van het archief van het Hof van Holland*, nr. 5366 dossier 14. This dossier consists of two parts. See II, fol. 16: May 19 1694, where Johan Philip Woestman states that he witnessed in The Hague a conversation "int Coffijhuys op de marckt", in which Walten had inquired of a certain

that the two greatest “scoundrels” (“schelmen”) ever had been Mohammed and Christ.⁵⁵ If Margaret Jacob and Silvia Berti are right in insisting on the special relevance of the Dutch Republic in relation to the origins of this clandestine treatise *par excellence*, it would seem especially imperative to reconsider the philosophical and theological radicalism of the last decades of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. And it seems impossible to do this without first re-examining the impact of disguised and overt Spinozism around 1700.

Orroick jr. (?) “of hij hem niet konde doen hebben het *Boeckje geintituleert de tribus impostoribus*. Denselven Orroick daerop antwoorde hetselve niet te hebben, noghte oock het hem te willen bestellen.” This could well be read to imply that this Orroick (?) did not want to *order* this book. But we should be careful: this does not imply that he was *able* to, nor do we know *when* this conversation took place—obviously it must have been before March 1694, when Walten was incarcerated. There is no reason to assume that this refers to the text published in 1719 as *L’Esprit de Spinosa*. Rumours about the existence of a *de tribus impostoribus* were much older than the text now generally considered as the ‘real’ *trois imposteurs*. It is, however, a challenging thought that Walten, like Vroesen, constantly moved between The Hague and Rotterdam, where Benjamin Furly’s famous library had become a centre of heterodoxy and dissent. Cf. *Trattato dei tre impostori*, ed. Berti, p. li-iii.

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, fol. 5. This report, by Walten’s landlord Cornelis Bouquet, is confirmed in II, fol. 26 by Hendrick van der Waeijfort, but denied by Walten himself: II, fol. 61.

RADICAL CARTESIANISM IN HOLLAND: SPINOZA AND DEURHOFF

Henri Krop

INTRODUCTION

One peculiarity of philosophical life in the Dutch Republic was the great interest of laymen in philosophy. Many individuals without a university background formed circles in which they tried to free themselves from “fixed usages and customs openly marked by arbitrariness”. They wanted to “search out truth for themselves, and thought that every man should have the opportunity to judge of truth for himself”.¹ The most famous example of such a non-academic philosopher is, of course, Spinoza, although he did have some formal education at the Latin school of Franciscus vanden Enden. There were, however, quite a few completely self-taught thinkers, such as the Amsterdam basket-maker Willem Deurhoff (1650-1717).²

For a long time, Deurhoff was considered to be a Spinozist.³ The arguments adduced for this were various, and I shall now make mention of some of the most important. The A manuscript of the *Korte Verhandeling* was prepared by the Amsterdam physician Johannes Monnikhoff (1707-1787), who was closely connected with the Deurhoff circle. According to Hubbeling, A was probably transcribed from a text in the possession of Deurhoff.⁴ Deurhoff, who

¹ Voorreden, in: *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstellinge van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, vol. I (Amsterdam, 1715), p. [***** 2].

² For details of the life of Deurhoff, see J.P. de Bie & J. Loosjes, *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland* (Den Haag, s.a.), vol. II, p. 455-460; A.C. Fix, “Willem Deurhof (1650-1717). Merchant and Philosopher”, *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland 1* (1990), p. 153-164.

³ See A. van der Linde, *Spinoza, seine Lehre und deren ersten Nachwirkungen in Holland* (Göttingen, 1862); C.L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme* (Amsterdam, 1954) and J. Severijn, *Spinoza en de gereformeerde theologie zijner dagen* (Utrecht, 1919), p. 160-176.

⁴ H.G. Hubbeling, “Zur frühen Spinozarezeption in den Niederlanden”, in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. K. Gründer & W. Schmidt-Biggemann (Heidelberg, 1984), p. 166.

knew no Latin and learned philosophy by reading Glazemaker's Dutch translations of Spinoza and Descartes, was familiar with the Dutch translation of the *Opera Posthuma*. And from the index of his collected works, it is obvious that Spinoza is the philosopher he quotes the most frequently.⁵ This is evident not only from such an early work as the *Beginzelen van waarheid en deugd* (1684), but also from the late work *Noodzaakelykheid en onverschillendheid der werkinge Gods* (1707).

The internal arguments are most fully stated in Severijn's *Spinoza en de gereformeerde theologie zijner dagen* (1919). According to Severijn, Deurhoff did not distinguish between God's will, intellect and power. He considered God to be pure action, and the human mind to be a modification of the substantial thought. He denied the occurrence of miracles, because he regarded all events in the world as being natural, and he took the intellectual love of God to be the highest human virtue. To the similarities notified by Severijn, one should add that Deurhoff, like Spinoza, denied the reality of sin.

The traditional view of the relationship between Spinoza and Deurhoff has recently been challenged. In 1984 Michael Petry pointed out the ideological bias of Severijn's book⁶ and that only a detailed analysis of Deurhoff's writings can justify our calling him a follower of Spinoza. Such an analysis has now been undertaken by Wiep van Bunge, and he has concluded that although Spinoza's philosophy lies behind many of Deurhoff's assertions, the differences between the two thinkers are too great to allow us to call the basket-maker a Spinozist.⁷

⁵ In the first volume of his collected works, Hobbes and Socinus are quoted once, Spinoza four times, and he is discussed on more than fifty of the pages. In the *Bespiegeling van de Heilige Godgeleerdheid handelende van de werken der natuur* (Amsterdam, 1697), Spinoza's name is to be found once on page 56, Spinoza's view of the resurrection of Christ is rejected in the *Volmaaktheid van der leere des geloofs* (Amsterdam, 1702), p. 312-313, and in the *Nootzaakelykheid en onverschilligheid der werkinge Gods* (Amsterdam, 1707), Spinoza, Crellius, Kuiper, Burgersdijck, Amesius, Wittich, Van Balen and Descartes are referred to. In his commentary on Job, Deurhoff names Aristotle, Tauler, Boehme, Plato, Descartes and Spinoza (twice).

⁶ "Behmenism and Spinozism in the Religious Culture of the Netherlands", in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, p. 129.

⁷ Wiep van Bunge, *Monnikhoff, Deurhoff en Spinoza* (Guest-lectures and Seminar papers on Spinozism), Rotterdam 1988, p. 8.

DEURHOFF'S CRITIQUE OF SPINOZA

It should not be overlooked that Deurhoff never calls himself a Spinozist, and that he frequently criticizes Spinoza. Firstly, he identifies Spinoza as the cause of the present unbelief, even though this had been fiercely denied by the latter.⁸ According to Deurhoff, this phenomenon is explained by Spinoza's concept of substance, defined as "a being [...] which exists by itself and whose essential perfections are in such a way perfect that it needs no other or external causes to exist. The sign of it is that to be conceived it requires or presupposes no other thing than its own essence" (*Voorleeringen*, p. 252). On account of this definition, God is a substance. On this point Deurhoff and Spinoza agree. However, according to Deurhoff it does not follow that there are no other substances and that all things have to be considered as attributes or modes of this unique substance.⁹ Deurhoff argues that two substances having the same attributes are not distinct—for example, two substances with the attribute thinking—but substances having the same cause of existence do not necessarily possess the same attributes. For, it is a logical possibility that both exist by themselves *and* possess different degrees of perfection. Deurhoff supposes that from the concept of substance one might deduce its simplicity, its eternity, its necessity and its immutability, but, for example, not that it is an intellectual and infinite being or an agent (p. 255).

Spinoza's definition of substance is of immediate consequence for his view of the relation between God and the universe, for as a perfect being the substance is also all-knowing and this omniscience concerns nothing outside God, but all the objects of its knowledge are included in it. However, these objects should not be regarded as attributes—such attributes are the love with which He loves himself, or the knowledge with which He knows himself—for they do not exist by themselves, so an attribution of these to God would affect God's simplicity (p. 257). Such a distinction between modes of being and attributes allows Deurhoff to make a clear-cut distinction between attributes, emanating necessarily from the nature of sub-

⁸ *Voorleeringen van de H. Godgeleerdheid steunende op de beginzelen van waarheid en deuchd*, part 3, in: *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstelling van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, vol. I, p. 248-276.

⁹ p. 253-254. See *Ethics* I, prop. 14 cor. 2. Deurhoff quotes Spinoza from the *Nagelate schriften* (1677).

stance, and modes or modifications, which are contingent. This implies that, in the order of things, creation does not flow necessarily from God and, in the conceptual order, that “in the concept of substance the foundation of finite things being modifications or passions cannot be found”. So, it is silly to regard the finite things as part of the divine nature in the way that Spinoza does. The difference in perfection between the infinity of substance and the finitude of particular things prevents such a metaphysical claim. Spinoza’s explanation of the finite world as modes of substance, Deurhoff calls a miraculous confusion, a blatant contradiction and mere presupposition (p. 258-259). According to the Amsterdam merchant, it is out of the question that Spinoza, on the basis of his concept of substance, would be able to explain in what manner the particular, finite and changeable things are related to the infinite, eternal and unique substance. Is it possible, for example, to suppose that the only substance possesses one mode and that the particular things should be conceived as parts of it? In that case they are finite with respect to each other, infinite taken as a whole (p. 261). However, even if there is no real separation between the creatures—which would imply a plurality in God—there is a relative distinction resulting from the manner in which they are related to the one and only general mode. For example, the essence of man resulting from a certain modification of God’s attributes is different from the modification resulting in a stone, for otherwise a stone and a man would be the same. So, although all matter as such is identical, between its parts of extension an actual distinction exists. Otherwise, extension would be conceived in an indivisible manner. The parts of a body could not be separated, and change and motion could not be explained (p. 262).¹⁰ So, finally, Spinoza’s philosophy comes to grief upon the rocks of experience, because the “sword of experience teaches us irrefutably the existence of finite and transient beings” (p. 268). “It is his arrogance, that he thinks that by considering himself as substance he is able to transcend from the finite to the infinite and imbibe an unrestrained life” (p. 267).

Deurhoff finishes the third part of his *Voorleeringen van de H.*

¹⁰ Deurhoff refers to *Ethics* I, prop. 15 cor. Spinoza tries to solve the problem by stating that quantity could only be divided and represented as finite by the imagination, not by the intellect. Deurhoff remarks that in such a manner he tries to make a contradiction conceivable.

Godgeleerdheid by criticizing Spinoza's thesis that the modifications emanate necessarily from God and that all in God's power is necessary.¹¹ This will be further discussed in the following sections. However, it implies that God produces all that he is able to produce, and that in all his works there is no order. God produces all without purpose (p. 289), that is to say, Spinoza rejects final causality. According to Deurhoff a final cause is the final effect of an action.¹² To reach this effect or end, the cause is moved to action. So, the final cause is eventually only to be found in the desire and the understanding of an intellectual efficient cause. Spinoza tried to erase all kinds of piety and religion from the human heart by acknowledging only matter and motion. He gave some plausibility to his theses by calling matter and motion 'God', a being devoid of intellect and will. Deurhoff refers to *Ethics* I, prop. 17 schol. denying the distinction in God of intellect and will presupposed in the concept of God as an intelligible acting being striving to some ends, and to *Ethics* I, prop. 36 app. According to Spinoza, final causes are only human fictions and of no use in our explanation of nature. For example, a stone falls from a roof onto the head of a man, killing him. Why? The cause is an accidental conjunction of circumstances: a man was passing by just at the moment when the wind blew a stone from the roof. This seems to lead to an infinite regress, since one could ask: Why did the man pass by just at the moment when the wind blew? One could say that the man had been invited by a friend. However, why had the man been invited by his friend? One could continue asking for causes "until the will of God as final cause is adduced, that is to say, one takes refuge in an asylum of ignorance." According to Spinoza, speaking in terms of final causality comes down to concealing one's ignorance behind learned terms. Deurhoff quotes Spinoza extensively, but he remarks that Spinoza did not prove his point: the incompleteness of our knowledge of a causal chain does not prove the non-existence of final causality as a whole.

According to Deurhoff, the effects of such a metaphysical doctrine on practical philosophy are disastrous. If man is only a modification of substance, and being conscious of this he "endeavours to persist in his being for an indefinite period" (*Ethics* III, prop. 9), nothing is

¹¹ *Ethics* I, prop. 33.

¹² *Het voorbeeld van verdraagzaamheid onder de goddelyke bezoeken, vertoond in de uitlegging en de verklaring van het boek Jobs*, vol. I (Amsterdam, 1741), p. 81-82.

in itself good, but “we desire nothing, because we deem it good, but we deem a thing good, because we long for it”. Virtue is nothing other than the power to seek what is useful to oneself (*Ethics* IV, prop. 20). So, a man with an evil nature seeking to do evil deeds according to his nature is a virtuous man (Letter 36). Virtue would be as different as there are particular human natures, and if a man judged it to be useful to himself he could steal, kill his fellow-man or injure his honour (p. 291). Further, “happiness consists in this, that man can preserve what is his own” (*Ethics* IV, prop 20). This thesis leaves out human beatitude after this mortal life (p. 290). So, Spinoza not only destroys morality, but also politics and religion. For there is on the one hand no divine or human justice as such, and on the other hand no sin or injustice. The state and laws are only based on arbitrary agreements, because they are introduced if man judges it to be to his own profit to use the help of his fellows. In Spinoza’s view there is no common good as such, only a covenant defining it according to the perceptions of individuals of their needs and profit.

The last important point of criticism concerns Spinoza’s exegetical method. Deurhoff rejects the way in which Spinoza in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* separates philosophy and theology. Deurhoff argues that it is inconceivable that Scripture could be explained by Scripture.¹³ In Deurhoff’s view, traditional maxims like “theology should not be mingled with philosophy” and the Calvinist “Scripture is to be explained by Scripture” are false, because “I clearly saw that all texts of the Holy Writ could not be explained and interpreted” by referring to other Bible texts. The Bible presupposes the knowledge of truths known by reason, for our reason is the only instrument possessed by us of interpreting Scripture” (*Grondvesten*, p. 541). The Bible is a text written in human language and so the normal means of explaining a human text have to be employed, that is to say our linguistic expertise and our philosophical knowledge concerning the objects discussed. The objection that God’s perfect nature transcends the human intellect, so that we cannot use it in interpreting the Bible, does not hold, since God’s infinity is indeed above our reason but that implies that, not only in the language of philosophy, but also in that of the Bible, affirmative

¹³ *Grondvesten der christelyke godsdienst*, in: *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstellinge van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, vol. I, p. 544.

statements cannot be made about it. Further, Spinoza's argument that the Bible is not a philosophical work, and is aimed not at the teaching of truth but at "the instruction of the people contaminated by false opinions and at the inducement to obedience" (p. 545), is, according to Deurhoff, much the same as that of the Roman Catholics who, fearing that the dogma of transubstantiation will break down before the court of reason, feel themselves forced to exclude the light of reason from religion and the Bible (p. 546). In many cases, reason itself proves the truth of the Bible.

On account of Deurhoff's critique, one might easily agree with Fix's conclusion that "Deurhoff was no Spinozist in the true sense of the word". However, such a judgement must be qualified as it presupposes a clear concept of Spinozism. If the criterion is all notions that modern research considers to be vital in Spinoza, there will be hardly any Spinozists in the seventeenth century. Lately, Wiep van Bunge has called our attention to the fact that Spinoza's distinction between substance and attributes found hardly any support or understanding among his contemporaries.¹⁴ In the next section I hope to demonstrate that the criticism of Spinoza by Deurhoff is neither incidental nor a consequence of his desire to hide his Spinozism, but the result of his own metaphysical thinking. Thus, it will become evident that his thought is more consistent than some historians like Van de Linde, Severijn and Hubbeling have suggested. In particular, I will try to show that Deurhoff's concept of God's will should be interpreted as a form of negative theology.

RADICAL CARTESIANISM

In spite of these essential differences, it is a fact that from the eighteenth century onwards all sorts of Christian libertarians, such as Deurhoff, Van Leenhof and Van Hattem, have been lumped together with Spinoza. In our age, the Dutch theologian Van Niftrik can still speak of "those eccentric sectarians and queer followers of Spinoza who inaugurated the Enlightenment".¹⁵ On account of his incisive critique of Spinoza, any attempt to consider Deurhoff as a Spinozist might be dismissed as a complete mistake, or a rhetorical strategy used by his orthodox opponents. However, it remains pos-

¹⁴ *Spinoza en zijn critici over de autonomie van het attribuut* (Delft, 1995).

¹⁵ G.J. van Niftrik, *Spinoza en de sectarieërs van zijn tijd* (Leiden, 1962), p. 2.

sible that the two thinkers did have something in common, which would explain why Deurhoff has given so many scholars the impression of being a Spinozist or “an author who wanted to contend with Spinoza, but took up so many things from him”.¹⁶ To use a well-known metaphor: beneath the differing conceptual surfaces of their philosophical systems may be hidden a common deep-structural whole of presuppositions, aims and positions in the contemporary philosophical debate. This complex in particular should be the object of the student of the intellectual history of Cartesianism.

A chance to find such an agreement between Deurhoff and Spinoza is offered by the work of Ruardus Andala (1665-1727).¹⁷ In the introduction to five collected theses dating from 1715 and directed against the *Ethica* of Geulincx, he states that in former times the Cartesian philosophy had many foes who fought it openly, such as atheists and sceptics.¹⁸ However, their work only purified and fortified the new philosophy in such a manner that the received (Aristotelian) philosophy was wiped out from the chairs of the universities of the Republic. There are also some who pretend to adhere to “the noble way of thinking of Descartes, but secretly mingle it with unwise and un-orthodox opinions” (*Examen*, p. 2). They should be regarded as “enemies of the Cartesian philosophy, nay of philosophy as a whole, pseudo-Cartesians who have even less in common with Descartes than the light with the dark, or truth with falsehood” (p. 3). The most dangerous of these men is Spinoza, but Andala reckons in this unpleasant society to some extent De Volder, Le Clerc, Geulincx and Deurhoff, who “irrigated his gardens with the impure

¹⁶ S. Galama, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs aan de hogeschool te Franeker 1586-1811* (Franeker, 1954), p. 76. The same idea is to be found in Van Bunge, “Monnikhoff, Deurhoff en Spinoza”, p. 8, who speaks about the “fascination”, “obsession” and “spinozistic passages that are a side-effect [...] of an infection caught in his fight against the virus of Spinoza”.

¹⁷ This applies also to his opponent in his dispute concerning the relation between Cartesianism and Spinozism, Johannes Regius (1685-1738), see Galama, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs*, p. 76. (The answer to Galama’s question of who is the author of the *orbis facinati* is, of course, Bekker: see Andala’s *Cartesius versus Spinozismi ever-sor...* (Franeker, 1719), I, § 60, p. 51). On Andala, see Galama, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs*, p. 138-150 and recently R. Bordoli “Non aliunde quam ex ratione adstrui possit. Cartesianismo e rinnovamento teologico alle origini del dibattito del 1686-1687 a Franeker”, in: *Il secolo d’Oro in Olanda*, ed. E. Montano & J. Sperna Weiland (forthcoming).

¹⁸ *Examen ethicae clar. Geulingii sive dissertationes philosophicae, in quibus [...] sententiae paradoxae [...] examinantur* (Franeker, 1715), p. 1.

waters of Geulincx" (p. 28). Also in *Cartesius versus Spinozismi eversor*, Andala sees Deurhoff as related to Spinoza, writing that "Van Hattem, Leenhof and Deurhoff are in no way Cartesians, but drank profusely from the breast of Spinoza".¹⁹ He underlines the differences between Descartes and Spinoza (p. 6), which Lodewijk Meijer had described in the preface of the *Renati des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae* and which were recognized by Spinoza himself in his letter to Oldenburg. With regard to our purpose, it is more interesting which theses Andala regards as basic to these pseudo-Cartesians. In the first instance, he thinks that their premise is the application of the geometrical method to all sciences in the same manner. This seduces such unwise philosophers into regarding the most certain sciences such as philosophy and theology, and the mysteries revealed in God's word as false (p. 9). Moreover, even in physics, the injudicious application of the geometrical method can lead to error. Descartes was, according to Andala, a scientist who in his study of nature was guided by experience.²⁰ This disregard of the differences between the sciences is caused by the presupposition of all pseudo-Cartesians that "from real principles all phenomena of nature can be deduced, that is to say, what applies to mathematics [...] applies to the physical sciences" (p. 15). Such a presupposition can only be adopted, according to Andala, if one regards creation as necessarily proceeding from God and one denies the contingency of this world. One could add that such philosophers consider God to be immanent.

If experience as a criterion is abandoned, all kinds of paradoxes result. The metaphysics of pseudo-Cartesianism, for example, denies the reality of the particular things. Andala adduces the example of Geulincx who states in his *Metaphysica* that the particular bodies might be called divisible, but body as such cannot.²¹ For, according to Geulincx, the separation of parts of a body requires a vacuum. The particular bodies are to be compared with a point on a line or

¹⁹ *Eversor* I, § 60, p. 51. Deurhoff, among others, would just like Spinoza consider the mind to be a mode of universal thinking and adhere to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Cf. Deurhoff, *Bespiegeling van de H. Godgeleerdheid handelende vande werken der natuur* (Amsterdam, 1697), part 8, p. 337, where he even states that Adam's body before the Fall is eternal.

²⁰ To Andala's *Eversor* is added the treatise *Cartesius physicae experimentalis architectus*.

²¹ *Metaphysica vera et ad mentem peripateticam* (Amsterdam, 1691), I scientia 8, p. 55-56 and 10, p. 61.

on the surface of a circle, that is to say as determinations of the mind without real existence. The same applies to the soul. We might say that our souls are filled with sorrow to the utmost, but in reality not our souls, but the mind is determined in a certain manner. How could it be explained, Geulincx asks himself, that all men with the exception of the wisest philosophers presuppose the existence of particular minds and bodies? The answer is that they have too much confidence in the senses. This statement is the reverse of Andala's criticism. Further, according to the Franeker professor, the pseudo-Cartesians separate, so to say, the normal world of our senses from the world of philosophy (and science). Such an approach deprives the words of their normal meaning²² and seriously injures practical philosophy and religion. This thesis forms the core of Andala's critique of Geulincx in this collection of dissertations. Geulincx' definition of virtue is "an extraordinary love of right reason".²³ The result, according to Andala, is that virtue does not generate acts which lead us, "as the former masters of ethics taught, to a supreme good".²⁴ Geulincx further describes the cardinal virtues in a manner that deviates from tradition; for example, humility is not the virtue of somebody who submits himself to the ordinations of God, but of a man being happy on earth (*Examen*, p. 118). In general, Geulincx sees an identity between obedience to God and obedience to reason. "Every reflection upon the hereafter, sin, reward and revealed commandments is systematically excluded."²⁵ All cults lose their meaning. In the eyes of Andala, Spinoza had the same view but expressed it in a clearer and more honest way (p. 109). Even the theology of the pseudo-Cartesians has only its name in common with the real discipline, and fundamental Christian ideas are deprived of their usual content. According to Geulincx, creation is not to be seen according to the "*schema actus efficientis*"—as in scholastic theology—for, otherwise, delusory images of the imagination are produced, representing God as an architect, a tailor or a smith, making a thing,

²² Cf. Regius's remark in *Beginnelsen der beschouwende filosofy* (Amsterdam, 1735), p. 329-330: "Spinoza uses many ordinary words, but gives them a completely different meaning".

²³ *Examen ethicae Clar. Geulingii...* (Franeker, 1716), p. 106.

²⁴ Cf. Deurhoff, *Bespiegeling van de H. Godgeleerdheid handelende van de werken der natuur* (Amsterdam, 1697), part 8, p. 334: "The love of God in the first man is not elicited, because he wanted to be happy, but he was happy because he loved God. [...] He loved God [...] on account of the necessity of his nature."

²⁵ Galama, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs*, p. 146.

whereas to create can only mean that the being of God precedes the being of the creatures. To obey God's commandments is, according to Andala, in Deurhoff's philosophy a pointless metaphor, as he states that a commandment of God is not a real precept, supposing that His commandments are in fact precepts of reason or laws of nature known to us by experience.²⁶

Concluding Andala's description of 'pseudo-Cartesianism' or, if one prefers a less polemical term, 'radical Cartesianism', we could say that its core is a paradoxical metaphysics caused by a neglect of experience connected with a concept of substance that leads to naturalism and to a rationalism with respect to religion and the Bible. The term 'naturalism' implies both a denial of free will and the liberty of God and refers to the view that the world is a self-determining system without interference from a supernatural power, God. It denotes, so to say, the radical point of view in the continuing debate within Cartesianism about these issues.²⁷ In this paper, I hope to show that Deurhoff is a radical Cartesian and possesses on that score a fundamental affinity with Spinoza.

NATURALISM IN DEURHOFF: THE DENIAL OF FREE WILL

Naturalism in my discussion of Deurhoff embraces two aspects: the denial of Free Will in man and the denial of God's Free Will in creating this universe. In the beginning of a letter to Van Blyenbergh, Deurhoff lays down in eight theses as "clear and firm principles" the foundations of his philosophy.²⁸ 1. A cause has an effect that is formally different. 2. An effect does not exist by itself, but by its cause. 3. A cause cannot be caused, because it would be both cause and effect and something composed of two formally distinct natures. 4. A cause lacks beginning, end and duration, for that would imply dependence, and is the cause of itself. Since God is a cause and the creatures depend on this cause, they are effects (*Verhandeling*, p. 6). 5. The creatures depending on God in all their being, nothing could

²⁶ *Bespiegeling van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, part 9, p. 355-356.

²⁷ M.E. Scribano, *Da Descartes a Spinoza* (Milano, 1988).

²⁸ *Klaare en beknopte verhandeling van de natuur en de werkinge der menschelijke zielen, engelen en duivelen, vervat in gewisselde brieven tusschen de heer Willem van Blyenbergh en Willem Deurhoff* (Amsterdam, 1692; 2nd ed. 1718), the first letter of 13-2-1692, p. 5. The translations of Deurhoff are my own.

happen without God being its cause. 6. So, there are no secondary causes. According to Deurhoff it is an old misunderstanding to say that God's causality coincides with that of man. 7. God created and produced all things in eternity in one sole act of will. So, saying that God maintains creation is a way of speaking adapted to our "timely thinking", that is to say the way in which our finite intellect represents the relation between God and creation (p. 7). 8. Deurhoff's conclusion: there is a metaphysical gap between God and creation which cannot be bridged. One should add that Deurhoff tends to speak about God in negative terms, for our thinking is linked to this temporal, created reality.

ORDINARY LANGUAGE AND THE BIBLE

Leaving aside for the moment Deurhoff's views on the relation between body and soul for their own sake, the letter to Van Blyenbergh clarifies the way Deurhoff reconciles his metaphysics outlined in the previous section with the Bible. He acknowledges the existence of two substances, namely body and soul. A body is characterized by length, breadth and depth; without these notions the other properties of a body cannot be conceived. Extended matter is a whole, a totality as well as a sum of essentially distinct parts (p. 7). This applies to many other things as well, like a man, a tree, a house, a community of citizens, etc. Extension is also a rational or imaginative being (p. 8). The second substance is known by all through introspection (p. 9). Language, that is to say a certain beating of the tongue against the roof of the mouth results from an activity of the body, but in contrast to other bodily movements man is conscious of it. He knows that he speaks. This consciousness of a bodily activity, Deurhoff uses the word "meewustheid", a literal translation of the Latin *conscientia*, presupposes an incorporeal, immaterial soul, because consciousness is not divisible into parts, nor movable. It is the attribute of the soul, because although it is possible that a body by means of the reflection of the light of another body imagines and pictures in it such another object, it never reflects upon itself. Further, this consciousness is knowledge and its primary object is God. For, reflecting upon the implications of knowing, it is evident that a being whose nature lies in knowing is conscious of itself. So, the human soul knowing itself and its essence realizes its imperfec-

tion and its impossibility to exist by itself and consequently knows its dependence on the cause of its existence (p. 9-10). The soul includes, solely by meditating upon its knowing, the concept of its cause, God. Deurhoff's argumentation, being almost a proof of God's existence, might be considered as a faint echo of Descartes' first argument in the third meditation.

The two substances do not interact, for only God is a cause. So, a corporeal perception is never able to produce an idea or concept. Deurhoff not only acknowledges that his philosophy is in conflict with ordinary language, which presupposes the causal efficiency of created things, but also that he himself is forced to use such kinds of expression (p. 13). However, if by abstracted speculation we arrive at truth, we must continue to use words related to the external appearance of things, except that the wise man is free to transpose such words to the things themselves (p. 13-14). The consequence of this imposition of language is that external changes are denoted by words like "becoming", "producing", "causing" and "making". This distinction between ordinary language and the language of science and philosophy is made by other Dutch Cartesians, but Deurhoff has to acknowledge that the Bible, when using expressions denoting secondary causes, does not speak the language of philosophy. "So, the Holy Writ is imposed with ordinary words." The orthodox minister Henricus Brink rubs in this unpleasant conclusion in a letter of reply.²⁹ "Is your denial of causal efficacy not in conflict with the Bible?", he asks Deurhoff (p. 8). For the Bible attributes to all kinds of bodies a causal operation. Brink gives a long list of verses of the Bible, and I shall quote some of them.³⁰ The sun, for example, burns (Mat 13:6), gives light (2 Sam 12:12) and blackens (Job 30:28). Also, animals without reason effect things; Brink gives the example of a lion, which according to Scripture raises itself, roars, kills and wanders about devouring people. Spirits operate, according to the Bible, but because the texts proving this have already been extensively put forward in the debates around Bekker, Brink does not want to enumerate them this time. Man, too, operates: he cultivates the earth, he spills the blood of his neighbour and he prepares a mournful fate for

²⁹ *Vervolg van de klare en beknopte verhandeling van de natuur en de werkinge der menschelijke zielen, engelen en duivelen...* (Amsterdam, 1693). Brink regards Deurhoff as being misled by Cartesian philosophy, making him blind to experience. As such, the "new philosophy" is in conflict with the "bevindinge" (p. 16).

³⁰ See the first letter of 18-10-1692, the pages 8, 9, 10.

a man falling into his hands. Even the soul effects things. It blesses, it does not accept the death of somebody, it infringes upon God's rights, it exhausts itself in sadness and it finds peace in Christ. In compiling this list, Brink says, he skipped all texts in which the Greek or Hebrew word soul is used to denote a person or the ordinary, natural life.

Brink continues that he knows what will be Deurhoff's answer to this bombardment of texts, namely that the Bible uses the language of the common people and not the language of philosophy, "the simple people, as you call them, lacking a perspicuous intellect. It is without philosophical correctness and not in accordance with the internal truth of things. In this way the Bible speaks about God having feelings, passions and limbs" (p. 11). That in this case the Bible uses improper language is acknowledged by every orthodox Christian, but this does not mean arbitrariness. For, whilst on the one hand the Bible often and consistently attributes a causal efficacy to created things (p. 12), it would undermine divine reliability if we were to say that in this case the language of the Bible is improper, since, on the other hand, the Bible never asserts the contrary. However, this is the case with the passions and feelings of God. Brink ends his letter by asking three questions which his friend Deurhoff should answer in any case. If God is a spiritual substance, how can He move bodies? If God is the cause of everything, is He not also the cause of sin (p. 20)? And how is a government justified in punishing a murderer if not he but God caused the death of his victim (p. 21)?

After a few skirmishes, Deurhoff responded to Brink with an extensive letter. The orthodox solution of Brink to the problem of the demarcation of proper and improper language in the Bible is rejected by Deurhoff, because scripture cannot be the interpreter of itself.³¹ In many cases the question of the meaning of a text cannot be answered internally, but only with reference to the 'nature of things', known to us through reason. The insufficiency of the Bible

³¹ The fifth letter of 28-2-1693, p. 54-55: "I say that the context does not always make evident the proper meaning, but often an examination of the nature of the subject-matter is needed". And: "The Holy Writ never explicitly states that a spirit is incorporeal and nevertheless we all agree that the texts implying a corporeal nature of spirits are to be explained metaphorically. The reason can only be the nature of the subject-matter". However, Deurhoff cautiously adds that these remarks only pertain to things knowable by reason and not by a special revelation from God.

appears from the fact that the incorporeality of souls is never asserted by the Bible. This fact, however, is obvious to any man having a clear and distinct knowledge of God.

DENIAL OF THE REALITY OF SIN AND THE FALL

Philosophically speaking, the denial of Free Will is a consequence of Deurhoff's thesis that God is the only cause and that the concept of secondary causes is inconsistent. For, he says, supposing that God created man with a Free Will, that is to say an independent will, his acts of will would be voluntary and not subject to a decision of God.³² They are contingent, and before the Fall the proposition that Adam would transgress the law was neither false nor true. Even God could not know which decision Adam would take. However, on what grounds did Adam decide? The will as such is indifferent to either of the alternatives. So, it could not cause Adam's act of will. Further, presupposing that there was no determination from God, only things outside the will could be the cause of Adam's choice. However, in that case the will is no longer free, because it depends on things outside its power. Those things are created by God, so even in this case God is the cause of Adam's acts of will. Christian theologians introduced the doctrine of Free Will to evade the consequence that the almighty God is the cause of sin. However, the doctrine of Free Will fails in this objective because, if God created the secondary causes and He knows beforehand the choice Adam will make, it is in conflict "with every true religion that God remained idle when the event of the Fall took place". Deurhoff concludes: "from here it is obvious that there is no premise which is able to explain that an act of a creature is produced without the effect being necessary". This statement refers to the medieval concept of *necessitas consequentis*, that is to say, if God wills A, A is necessary, even though in itself it is contingent. So, as Deurhoff states, I "thought I had demonstrated as clearly as daylight that all those denying the divine predetermination of man's voluntary acts are in conflict with the proper sense of the Bible." The audacity, and maybe one should say brutality, of this last remark certainly con-

³² *Grondvesten der christelyke godsdienst*, part 16, in: *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstellinge van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, vol. I, p. 614-620.

tributed to the vehement reaction of some of his contemporaries to Deurhoff's philosophy.

By the denial of its own activity to the human will (and body), Deurhoff is faced with two problems in the field of practical philosophy and Christian belief. How punishment can be justified—a question the minister Brink had already asked Deurhoff, as we have seen—and how it is to be avoided that God be the author of sin. The answer of Deurhoff to the first question is quite simple. The justification of punishment is not the removal of vice and the guidance of the criminal towards virtue, but the promotion of common peace and stability. The proof is that the state does not punish crimes, even though it is conscious of them, that are horrible in themselves, like avarice and presumption. The second question is resolved by denying the reality of sin.³³ Sin is a privation and not something factual (*zaakelijk*). So, God is not the immediate cause of my murdering a man. The motion of the bullet hitting him in the heart is as a physical motion, a motion like all others. What makes this motion a crime are the intentions accompanying it in the soul. The eventuality that I have such bad intentions and feelings is caused by the Fall. According to Deurhoff, the Fall is not an historical event that caused God to change human nature by a decision of His will, for God is unchangeable. All that God created cannot cease to exist, so man being created in the image of God is and remains the image of God. By bearing that image man is able to raise himself to his real object, God. This real knowledge leads to a real love of Him and to tranquillity and enjoyment of the beloved thing. If the human soul loves a created object, this is in conflict with the nature of the soul and it will remain unsatisfied. The soul remains in a state of sin and is vexed by qualms of conscience. From this state of impotence man cannot free himself. The cause of sin, according to Deurhoff, is the lack of perfection with which man is created in eternity, but since such a privation is not caused by God, God is not the author of sin. So, Deurhoff takes the Fall as an image of an ahistorical imperfection.

According to Deurhoff, redemption is the removal of the non-essential imperfection of man that is sin. Neither does such a removal imply a change in God, although from a lack of perfection of our intellect we are forced to conceive Fall and redemption in a

³³ *Vervolg van de klare en beknopte verhandeling*, p. 63-64.

chronological order. For we are only capable of imagining things in time and duration. To assist our weak intellects, Deurhoff gives an example. The soul operates like a river flowing straight on, but in the course of time, being blocked by impurities coming from outside, sticking together and forming a barrage, the stream is forced to deviate from its natural course. However, there is the more forceful flux of God's activity flowing together with the human soul. Without changing itself, this stream destroys the barrage formed in our soul. According to Deurhoff, the human mind is forced to use images because it has to use a temporal concept for what in God is eternal.

GOD AND CREATURES: NEGATIVE THEOLOGY IN DEURHOFF?

The problem of human Free Will did not bother Deurhoff very much in comparison with the problem of the relation between God and creation. He sees three alternatives to explain how the universe came into existence.³⁴ (a) The universe had no beginning and came into existence by itself, (b) the universe is caused, but without a beginning, and (c) the world is caused with a beginning (*Bespiegeling*, p. 5-6). The third alternative is Deurhoff's and he proves it by showing the falsity of (a) and (b).

The first alternative includes among others the possibility of an infinite chain of efficient causes. Deurhoff thinks that this view cannot "be justified before the court of reason." Examples of representatives of this view are Democritus and Epicurus who taught that indivisible particles through accidental collision produce all particular phenomena. Some argue that an infinite chain of causes cannot exist because, just as in the popular saying of the chicken and the egg, there must be a first cause (p. 8). Deurhoff rejects this argument, because a lack in our understanding can never be an argument to prove something. However, if we turn our attention to the preservation of creation, it will be clear that an infinite chain of causes is impossible, because such a chain of causes would have to actually exist. So, this argument precludes there being an infinite chain of causes of the existence of this world. This reminds us of the scholastic distinction between the actual and potential infinite. Another argument is directed in particular against the Greek atomists and

³⁴ *Bespiegeling van de Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, p. 6.

illustrates Deurhoff's view of matter. According to him, we should at least suppose another cause separate from the atoms, for movement cannot be reduced to the concept of extended matter. Motion is a change of place and not a property to be attributed to a body or a property distinguishable from the body, but only the mode in which we perceive a particular body (p. 17). This becomes obvious if one attends to the concepts of above and below. Those concepts are not properties of the notion of body, but result from the way in which the perceiver perceives the body. An alternative of the first possibility is to say that the world is created from a pre-existent matter (p. 21). This view, having been the opinion of many Greek philosophers, is false, for matter would in this case be the cause of itself. This is impossible, because all things that exist have a reason for their existence. "For to say that something exists because it exists is a tautology and does not extend our knowledge" (p. 22). Thus, something exists through its self-sufficiency or through the perfection of its efficient cause. The first alternative applies to a thing that because of its positive perfections needs no cause for its existence. Its existence is necessary, because the negation of its existence implies a contradiction. Matter existing through self-sufficiency cannot be deduced from its concept. It is even in conflict with our notion of matter. Thus, extension is not a perfection including existence, and so matter must be produced by an efficient cause.

The second alternative is that the universe was caused, but without a beginning, so necessarily. There are to be distinguished two further possibilities, namely that creation is produced by an emanation or division of God, or that God's attributes imply the necessity of creation. According to Deurhoff the first alternative is false, because in that case there would be no difference between God and His creatures. Some pagan teachers from India hold this view. They think that God took from His substance the souls and all things corporeal and material in this world. In this process He is not the efficient cause, but He is to be compared with a spider producing the threads of its web from its bowels. Creation is as the emanation and extension of its substance. The destruction of the creation could be conceived as the collecting of the threads in the spider. According to Deurhoff this view denies all real causation and is the foundation of Spinoza's philosophy (p. 56).

With Deurhoff's treatment of the second alternative we arrive at

his concept of God.³⁵ According to the Amsterdam merchant, in the traditional Christian doctrine the contingency of the Creation is explained by distinguishing between God's intellect and will. God eternally conceives all alternatives He could create that do not imply contradiction—these concepts in God's intellect were called His ideas. In eternal freedom He chooses from among these alternatives the one He wants to create. This doctrine implies a certain logical priority of the intellect above the will. According to Deurhoff this 'priority' implies a distinction in God, which is incompatible with God's simplicity. For God is absolute actuality, and if we differentiate in Him between will and intellect it is because we perceive in ourselves a difference between the passivity of the intellect and the activity of the will.

In the matter of creation we should start with what is clear and distinct. At first it is obvious that we possess a concept of a God existing by itself with an essence that is pure activity.³⁶ From this concept of God we are in no way able to deduce the property that He must create necessarily, nor that He is free not to create, while from the concept of matter it really follows that it is divisible. "Our concept of God shows us the necessity of His existence and efficacy, but not whether He is able to operate or not to operate nor whether he operates necessarily or contingently" (p. 36). The relation of God's essence to other creatures different from Him cannot be known by speculation about His unique essence. From experience we learn that some things depend on others and from that we understand that the finite things depend on God. Whether they are in God, or formally and eminently present in God, or emanate from Him, our finite intellect cannot know (p. 38). We know the relation of God to creation only a posteriori, on the basis of experience, and not a priori on the basis of a concept. This implies that questions like Could God have refrained from creating?, or Could He have given the things a different essence?, cannot be answered. "Those who say they do not know speak the truth, and those who make claims reach

³⁵ "The eternity of God [...] is formally distinct from duration and time. In a proper sense in God no past, future and present is to be conceived", p. 58. We can only use a verb in reference to God in an omnipresent sense abstracted from time, e.g. God is, but not God will be and God was. However, Deurhoff's conclusion is different from Spinoza's: no monism, but dualism between God and creatures.

³⁶ *Volslaagen afhankelykheid aller schepzelen van de eeuwige oorzaak [...] tegen de uitvluchten van Paulus Buchanus en Salomon van Til* (Amsterdam, 1702), p. 36.

further than the length of the stick of their intellect" (p. 39). Deurhoff's conclusion is that we can assert neither God's Free Will, for if we do so we do not understand the things we are saying, nor that He necessarily did what He did, for that supposes a necessity outside God, which forces Him to create as He created. Lacking a better alternative, he chooses the concept of God's indifferent (onverschillig) will. This implies, I should say, that Deurhoff, perhaps unconsciously, develops a form of negative theology. This becomes obvious from Deurhoff's last philosophical work, the *Nootzaakelijkheid en onverschilligheid der werkinge Gods*, published in 1707. This work consists of five letters directed to him, one written by a woman, and his replies. The theme of the discussion is Deurhoff's thesis that the concept of God's indifferent will only denies other assertions and claims no positive content. Deurhoff is asked some questions: for example Is his view compatible with the nature of the will?, Could God's will being indifferent with respect to the objects in His intellect cause that 2 and 3 make 5, or other eternal truths are false?³⁷

Deurhoff answers by outlining the controversy.³⁸ On the one hand, there are the Socinians, Descartes and Burgersdijck, who considered God to be free, and on the other hand Wittich and Spinoza, who regarded God's creation as necessary. Deurhoff contends that both doctrines, that God is free and that God produces necessarily, imply absurdities. Because the doctrines of those thinkers have already been touched upon, I will now call your attention only to the arguments clarifying Deurhoff's view of the limits of our knowledge of God. According to the Socinian Crellius, God knows the present, remembers the past and has prescience of the future. God foresees the things He will create from previous existing matter, but He is able to destroy what He has made if the result disappoints Him.³⁹ God remains in this way free to do as He pleases. He is able to learn, so to say, from the past, because He has created a universe an infinite number of times.⁴⁰ In this doctrine, Deurhoff contends, the word "indifference" is used in a most anthropomorphic sense. He continues by saying that God is depicted as an artist who creates

³⁷ N.N. letter to Willem Deurhoff of 25-7-1705, p. 2.

³⁸ The fourth letter to Joan van der Velde of 8-12-1705, p. 72-123.

³⁹ Deurhoff refers to his "Van God en zyn eigenschappen", probably the translation of 1642 with the title *Beschrijvinghe, Van Godt en zijne eighenschappen*.

⁴⁰ Frans Kuiper, *Den Philosophierenden boer...* (S.l., 1676), III, p. 19.

everything of which pre-existing matter is capable, who destroys His creatures if He likes and can change his mind and make other things, as if by this alternation He sought new honour and delight. Such a view, however, annihilates God's veracity, for it implicates Him with time and makes Him a changing being dependent on creation. It was unnecessary to refute this view extensively, but "I regarded it as sufficient to demonstrate the purely human meaning of the word indifference in the Socinian vision" (p. 76). Deurhoff proceeds by discussing the traditional scholastic view, which he finds expounded in Burgersdijck's *Metaphysics* (II, ch. 7) and Amesius's *Medulla theologiae* (I, ch. 7). In God, a simple apprehension of all possible things, which are presented by the intellect to God's will, is distinguished from the judgement of the will determining which things will be created. This view, Deurhoff remarks, he has already refuted thirty years earlier in his *Beginzelen van deugd*.

Also, Descartes' doctrine of the creation of eternal truths should be rejected.⁴¹ According to Descartes, God created the necessary truths in the same way as the contingent truths, i.e., that 2 and 3 make 5 could be made false in the same manner as that this world exists. So, God could make the contraries of eternal truths themselves true. However, of complete contradictions, that is to say statements contradicting His essence, such as things being created in such a manner that they are independent of God, one should say that they are never true. The falsity of eternal mathematical truths is only inconceivable to us, that is to say to our limited intellect, and therefore 2 and 3 make 6 is not an absolute contradiction. However, according to Deurhoff, we do not know if God's power extends itself that far, and this implies that "All those who express such things with words do not know what they are saying, because their words are meaningless" (p. 80). The question whether God could make contradictions true is one that we cannot answer, because it implies statements about things outside the limits of our knowledge and to which we have no access. So, we are not allowed to say that God is tied to the nature of a triangle in such a manner that He is forced to create it having three angles of which the sum is 180 degrees, nor that God could make a triangle otherwise. This conclusion is a logical consequence of the metaphysical gap between God and creatures.

⁴¹ Deurhoff refers to Book I, letter 110 and 115 in the Dutch translation.

NATURALISM: THE MIRACLE

According to Deurhoff, the intellect is a "part of nature", that is to say, the *natura naturata*. Reason, however, is not able to penetrate the whole of nature.⁴² So, events could happen which we cannot understand. Such phenomena are never against reason, but should be called above our understanding. The problem of miracles is in Deurhoff's philosophy the problem of the limits of reason, and he discussed it several times in his works.⁴³ According to him, everything is determined by God and in that sense natural. This, on the other hand, does not imply that such events cannot be regarded as miraculous, but such a view is the result of our lack of knowledge. In his commentary on Job, published after his death by his friend J. vanden Velde, Deurhoff develops his views in relation to Job 5:9: "Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number". Deurhoff begins by claiming that great things and miracles occur to induce man to prayer. For, the creatures realize that they have received all from the eternal cause of everything. Man "being not of his own" received all he needs by means of the favour of another. The human mind being conscious of its wants directs itself to an independent and self-sufficient being that is able and willing to provide for it, and becomes truly religious. For man sees God's providence and that the whole of the world is in His hands and is directed by Him to its destination (*Voorbeeld*, p. 272).

Deurhoff proceeds by explaining what is to be understood by the great acts of God. That is, events concerning many people and useful to many. Such deeds are, preeminently, the creation, the condition of the earth (that is to say the motion of the earth around its axis causing the alternation of day and night and the oblique position with respect to the sun causing the sequence of the seasons), the motion of the animals and the grace of God. The fact of creation is, according to Deurhoff, denied by Spinoza, who accepted the existence of only one substance and rearrangements of it, calling them modes. Spinoza's doctrine of substance amounts to saying "frankly"

⁴² *Voorleeringen van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, part 4, in: *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstellinge van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, vol. I, p. 277.

⁴³ *Beginzelen van waarheid en deuchd*, part 9, in: *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstellinge van de H. Godgeleerdheid*, vol. I, p. 102-104; *Volmaaktheid van der leere des geloofs*, part 6 (Amsterdam, 1702), p. 171-210 and *Het voorbeeld van verdraagzaamheid onder de goddelyke bezoeken*, p. 272-292.

that there is no God (p. 277). Even the concept of emanation which found support in Antiquity and recently from Tauler and Boehme, leads man away from true piety.

What is to be understood by 'miracle', the concept used in the second part of the verse (p. 282)? Deurhoff claims that the occurrence of miracles is universally accepted. Only Epicurus denied it, supposing that the deity did not care about the universe. The Socinians, too, being of the opinion that God only possesses a mediate knowledge of future events, in fact refuse to acknowledge the existence of miracles. If the purpose of miracles is the causing of wonder, creation itself should in a proper sense be regarded as the greatest miracle, for on contemplating it "our intellect stops" (p. 284).

The explanation of miracles presupposes the idea "that all happening in bodily nature is produced by an alteration of modes, that is to say by motion". The Bible only relates the result, but does not say how the miracle was caused.⁴⁴ Deurhoff turns against a number of traditional definitions of miracle. The first is that according to some Socinians, who, Deurhoff remarks, are led astray by Spinoza, that a miracle is an event or phenomenon having an effect contrary to nature.⁴⁵ For example, the feeding of the five thousand—which is contrary to the law of nature that every whole from which parts are taken diminishes – or Christ walking on the water—being contrary to the law that all heavy bodies fall through lighter and fluid ones. Both events are, according to Deurhoff, just like all miracles done by Christ in the New Testament, phenomena not contrary to nature and to be understood as follows. The story of the feeding of the five thousand which is described in Marc 6:40-44 is the account of a natural event, because it is entirely produced by the motion of bodies. According to Deurhoff, the five loaves and two fishes are bodies forming part of a whole. However, this whole was scattered in such a manner that "our senses were not touched by it" (p. 182-183). The scattered bodies of this whole were in the air and, by means invisible to us and at first sight contrary to nature, in the hands of the eaters at the moment of the miracle. We see that the bread is ground by the miller, kneaded with moisture by the baker and prepared by the fire. We know what occurs in general among the sensible phenomena and we are able to formulate rules about their causal rela-

⁴⁴ *Volmaaktheid van der leere des geloofs*, part 6, p. 171-172.

⁴⁵ See *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, ch. 6.

tions, but we are not aware of the internal relations of things beyond what is perceivable. Even the miracle of Jesus is not contrary to nature; gravity is not an attribute of bodies, their attributes being only extension and motion (p. 199-207). Gravity is an effect of motion and to be explained in the following manner. Small bodies move quickly and are pushed to the outside of a space by the greater bodies. Large bodies move slowly, so they remain near the middle. By agreement we call them heavy. If all bodies had a flat form the smaller bodies could not be pushed away by the greater bodies and bodies near the centre of the earth would remain there, but since practically all bodies are irregularly formed the smaller parts of matter, being compressed, escape by openings in the earth's crust, pushing aside the larger ones. To all who have seen the examples of volcanoes, the explosion of gunpowder propelling a canon ball on high, and fountains, this phenomenon is manifest. So, the rule that heavier bodies fall through lighter ones is not a law of nature at all, but only a rule applying usually. The event described in the Bible that is apparently contrary to nature is, according to Deurhoff, brought about by winds at the bottom of the lake propelling the waters to the surface the moment Christ stepped out of the boat. The water had such a force that Christ was walking on the top of a moving fountain. Reading Deurhoff's explanation of the miracles in the Bible, one could ask whether the difference with Spinoza, who denied their possibility, is as great as Deurhoff pretends, because both presuppose a naturalistic view of nature.⁴⁶ So, according to Deurhoff, the quoted definition of a miracle is incorrect. In it, the observation of ordinary people is taken as the criterion of the powers of nature and not the essences of things.

The traditional Christian concept of a miracle as a supernatural event emerges more clearly in the second definition that Deurhoff discusses, namely the effect of an act of God beyond the powers of nature (p. 286). Such a definition injures the unity of God, because then God would not be able to produce such an effect in accordance with the laws of nature, but would possess another power acting without using nature, or, even worse, it implies the existence of two gods. There would be a difference between what God is doing and what nature does. The last definition treated by Deurhoff is that a

⁴⁶ Spinoza's view on miracles is, for example, discussed in S. Zac, *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'écriture* (Paris, 1965), p. 199 ff.

miracle is an event contrary to the usual course of nature. However, one should remember that such an event is apparently produced without a reason or cause and, being unusual, thus induces us to astonishment. Moreover, the definition does not only apply to miracles, because we are ignorant of the causes of many phenomena, such as magnetism, which we generally do not call miracles.

Is it conceivable that miracles occur in accordance with the laws of nature, but are not a part of the causal chain that started with Creation? Deurhoff's answer to this question is no, for just as in nature a vacuum is impossible because all motion is caused by contact with other moving bodies, so a cause cannot start acting all at once. All motion and causation is to be traced back to a starting-point, called by Deurhoff "the first point of motion". Further, the miracles of Christ would require a separate cause in God, and the moment Christ, for example, healed a blind man the actuality of God would increase and God, so to speak, would age.

Contrary to Spinoza, Deurhoff does accept the occurrence of miracles, but he maintains a strict 'naturalism', as all events in this world, being caused by God, are in that sense 'natural'. The stories of the Koran relating miracles of Mohammed that were against common sense, nature and correct reasoning are absurdities and invented falsities (p. 290). Only if one takes the Bible literally does it contain such absurdities contrary to reason. If Holy Writ tells that God accepts corporeality, or has human limbs, everyone understands "clearly and convincingly" that it uses improper language and images. It seems that Deurhoff contradicts himself by saying on the one hand that miracles are events we cannot understand, because we are ignorant of their causes, and on the other that reason and common sense determine whether the Bible uses figurative language. However, according to Deurhoff all our knowledge derives from experience. Experience teaches us certain regularities, for example the motion of the heavenly bodies, or the propagation of man by means of sexual intercourse. We know the cause of the first phenomenon, but we are ignorant of the second. Miracles, that is to say events deviating from what happens normally, are also known by experience. So, it is not Deurhoff's view that it is a deep philosophical insight into the true nature of things that tells us when we have to take the Bible in a literal sense and when not, but rather our senses, or better, the senses of the authors of the Bible. In Deurhoff

a miracle is no longer a problem of natural philosophy, but one of historical criticism.

Although Deurhoff uses traditional Christian language, his argument amounts to a defence of naturalism. This is apparent from the criticism levelled at his work in 1747 by Johan van den Honert, professor of theology at Leiden, and son of a fierce opponent of Deurhoff, Taco van den Honert.⁴⁷ In the preface to the Dutch translation of a Jesuit defence of the Christian view of prophecy, he maintains that the temple of the Christian religion rests upon the two pillars of prophecy and miracle. The latter is undermined by Deurhoff, who does not distinguish between miracles and the works of God in general. Van den Honert maintains that both are effected by God's power, but that their purposes are different. He takes the centre of Deurhoff's view to be the thesis that a miracle is an event similar to any other phenomenon, in that it is caused within the order of motion, and rests on an eternal, free and unchanging decision of God. (*Verdediging*, p. [** 3]). This thesis of Deurhoff I took to be implicitly naturalistic.

The Leiden professor takes Deurhoff's explanation of Christ's walking on the water to be a mere guess scarcely worthy of a novelist. It is, however, Deurhoff's exegesis that is his main concern. Deurhoff's definition of miracle implies that it is just as marvellous that the fire did not burn Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the oven of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3) as that the heat did kill the men who pushed the Judeans into the fire. According to Van den Honert, Deurhoff's comment on the question of the king of Babel: "Who is the god who would rescue you from my hands?" should be, that it is evidence of his ignorance of the laws of nature. Is Deurhoff, on the basis of his philosophy, able to explain the reaction of the people to the miracle of the feeding of the multitude: "this man is truly a prophet"? And is he able to understand the meaning of such a text if he does not accept the miracle as being "a pointer from God", that is to say a direct and supernatural intervention in the causal order? Van den Honert did indeed touch the heart of the matter: Deurhoff's attempt to reconcile the Bible with naturalism is not a very successful one. Through the eyes of his philosophy, the Bible

⁴⁷ The preface contains 52 unnumbered pages in Baltus S.J., *Verdediging der profeetsien van den Kristelyken Godts-dienst, [...] tegen twee vermaerde mannen Hugo Grotius en Richard Simon* (Leiden, 1747).

became a book without mysteries and Christianity a religion appealing not to the heart but to the shallow intellect, the standard critique in the early nineteenth century of this form of enlightened religion.

To return to the central theme of my paper: Was Deurhoff a Spinozist? According to my view, the answer should be both yes and no. However, it may be that with respect to intellectual history this question is incorrectly formulated. The comparison between the Amsterdam merchant and the philosopher of Rijnsburg teaches us that in the second half of the seventeenth century Spinoza was not the lense-grinding recluse of nineteenth-century historiography, but that the presuppositions and aims of his philosophy were shared by others in the Republic. Such affinities are brought to light by the concept of 'radical Cartesianism'.

IN SEARCH OF SPINOZA IN THE *HISTOIRE DES OUVRAGES DES SAVANS*

Jan de Vet

A mirror of the intellectual life of their time and a platform where men of learning could exchange ideas: these were two functions of the periodicals of learning of the Ancien Régime. Research into this material has abundantly proved its value for intellectual history. This is valid for the history of Spinozism as well: the discovery of Spinoza's Letter 19 to Van Blijenbergh in *De Boekzaal Der Geleerde Wereld*, edited by Willem Séwel¹ and the evidence that Spinoza was not the author of *Stelkonstige Reeckening Van Den Regenboog* and of *Reeckening van Kanssen*, demonstrated by means of an article in Pieter Rabus' *De Boekzaal van Europe*,² constitute convincing proofs. No wonder that recently there have been systematic investigations into old periodicals like Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* and Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique* to see what they could tell us about Spinoza and the circulation of his ideas.³ The periodicals in the United Provinces, published in an area with a relatively great freedom of the press and, moreover, the cradle of Spinozism, are of especial interest. And such a periodical is the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans* which we will examine here. It appeared from Sep-

¹ Spinoza, *Briefwisseling*, ed. F. Akkerman *et al.* (Amsterdam 1977), p. 518.

² Cf. J.J.V.M.de Vet, "Was Spinoza de auteur van 'Stelkonstige Reeckening Van Den Regenboog' en van 'Reeckening Van Kanssen'?", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 45 (1983), p. 602-639 and "Spinoza's authorship of 'Stelkonstige Reeckening Van Den Regenboog' and of 'Reeckening Van Kanssen' once more doubtful", *Studia Spinozana* 2 (1986), p. 267-309; *idem*, contribution, without title yet, to the acta of the colloquium "Les textes de Spinoza: un inventaire", (to be published) held at Groningen 13-15 September 1990.

³ For example, Pierre Bayle, *Écrits sur Spinoza*, ed. Françoise Charles-Daubert & Pierre-François Moreau (Paris, 1983), p. 142-145, 174; J.J.V.M.de Vet, "La 'Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique': témoignage d'une revue à propos de la lutte autour de Spinoza à la fin du XVII^e siècle", *Lias* 16 (1989-1), p. 81-110. On several periodicals: J.J.V.M. de Vet, "Learned Periodicals from the Dutch Republic and the Early Debate on Spinoza in England", *Miscellanea Anglo-Belgica* (Leiden, 1987), p. 27-39.

tember 1687 till June 1709 with the exception of the year 1707.⁴

The editor of this periodical was the Huguenot Henri Basnage de Beauval, formerly a lawyer in Rouen, later living as a refugee in the United Provinces, and heir-apparent of Pierre Bayle when the latter abdicated as editor of the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. In his "Préface" Basnage called his predecessor "l'illustre auteur", and they were friends until Bayle's death, although there was a certain coolness in about 1700.⁵ The philosopher supported Basnage in his editorial task, among other things by sending him memoirs,⁶ but the latter did not become the "heraut de Mr. B" and maintained his own ideas.⁷ Although the different dispositions of the two editors and the difference in circumstances left their traces, *Nouvelles* and *Histoire* may be considered as two phases of one periodical, for instance from the nearly equal attention that was paid to "la question religieuse".⁸ In the *Nouvelles*, Charles-Daubert and Moreau drew attention to passages on Spinoza six times (there are a few more⁹), in the *Histoire* there is a greater number, obviously because of its longer period of publication. This number was irregularly spread over the years with a remarkable vacuum in the period 1692-1695. Two of these places were referred to in the famous article "Spinoza" in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*.¹⁰

⁴ See on this periodical *Dictionnaire des journaux 1600-1789*, ed. J. Sgard (Paris-Oxford, 1991), p. 543-545, no. 605; *Henri Basnage de Beauval en de Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans...* ed. Hans Bots (Amsterdam, 1976), 2 vols.; Hans Bots & Lenie van Lieshout, *Contribution à la connaissance des réseaux d'information au débat du XVIIIe siècle...* (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1984). The *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans* is further indicated as *HOS*.

⁵ A. Schuurman, in: *Henri Basnage de Beauval*, ed. Bots, I, p. 12 ff.

⁶ Bots & Van Lieshout, *Contribution*, p. xviii.

⁷ Lenie van Lieshout, in: *Henri Basnage de Beauval*, ed. Bots, II, p. 150.

⁸ Hubert Bost, *Un 'Intellectuel' avant la lettre: le journaliste Pierre Bayle (1647-1706)...* (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1994), p. 6 calculates that 47% of Bayle's periodical deals with "la question religieuse". In the *HOS* this is about 45% if the small category of canon law is not included, which it is in Bost. (In acknowledgement to Dr L. van Lieshout for her information).

⁹ Among other things we can add: *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* 1685, 1336-1350, especially 1349, on James Dalrymple, first Viscount Stair. Cf. De Vet, "Learned Periodicals", p. 31 and note 38. In *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* 1684, 385 *De Waerheyt van de christelijcke godts-dienst...* (1674) is meant, of Willem van Blijenbergh, who was not mentioned by Charles-Daubert and Moreau in Bayle, *Écrits sur Spinoza*, p. 142 ("on ait écrit [...] en flamand") in connection with the fragment quoted from an article on Saldenius.

¹⁰ Remarque M, note 75, reference to *HOS*, March 1696, article III, on a work by Van Til. Remarque S, note 137, reference to *HOS*, March 1689, article X, on a work

What sort of information is the result of a search through Basnage's periodical? News on passages referring to Spinoza that occur in summaries or reviews of books on all sorts of subjects, only by exception on Spinoza's philosophy itself. Further, information in the form of short announcements of the publication of works containing something on Spinoza or his doctrines, delivered by Basnage's correspondents and published by him in his column "Extraits de diverses lettres". Finally, passages on Spinoza in "mémoires" sent in by readers. The *Histoire* reviewed new publications and that is why there are no items dealing directly with recent reprints of Spinoza's work.¹¹ Of course, the *Placaet* of 1678 will have had its influence, but perhaps it was too late according to the standard of the periodical.

However, for the history of Spinozism it was an early hour, although Spinoza's death was no longer "de fraîche date", as Bayle could still call it in 1682.¹² Meanwhile, a growing cohort of authors had formed with views on Spinoza, dwarfs as well as giants according to the standards of the time, which do not always correspond with ours. The *Histoire* pictures them fragmentarily, as appears from comparison with other periodicals. In Basnage's periodical Spinoza was nearly always opposed and often abused. This rejection, sometimes carried on in vehement tones—which was mostly rhetorical practice¹³—is the more understandable as authors in fields like bible studies, metaphysics, ethics, or state philosophy held ideas that partly opposed those of Spinoza and partly corresponded to them. The radicalism and cohesion of Spinoza's system seemed to absorb the reasoning of such authors with as a reaction absolute rejection. So it

by Le Vassor. Bayle, who did not read Dutch, knew this work by Van Til also from "Le Journal de Leipsic", that is, from the *Acta Eruditorum*. Cf. Bayle's article "Spinoza" note d and Remarque P. In his interesting study, *Het artikel Spinoza in de Dictionnaire Historique et Critique van Bayle*, E.F. de Regt bases himself exclusively on Bayle's knowledge of Van Til's book in the *Acta Eruditorum*, see p. 34, 42 note 5, 47 note 41. (This work has not been published, but can be consulted in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek at The Hague, Depot, signature 5.030.710). The article "Spinoza", Remarque A, also contains a reference—without a marginal note—to *HOS* September 1690, p. 13, on Jacques Salier *Historia Scholastica de speciebus eucharisticis...* (Paris, 1689). See on this work *infra* in this article.

¹¹ The numbers 20, 22, 23 from J. Kingma & A.K. Offenbergh, *Bibliography of Spinoza's Works up to 1800* (Amsterdam, 1977), are not discussed or mentioned in the *HOS*.

¹² *Pensées Diverses*, par. 181.

¹³ Rhetoric definitely played a part in learned debates at the time. For Spinoza this has been shown convincingly by F. Akkerman. See his "Le caractère rhétorique du 'Traité Théologique-Politique'", *Les Cahiers de Fontenay* 36-38 (1984), p. 381-390.

was quite something when Basnage had to report that an author thought the common attacks on Spinoza were missing the mark, or even that he could not refute Spinoza. A few of these passages occur in the periodical. They will be presented here in the context of all the other passages on Spinoza—with the hope that they have all been found—because the meaning of these lines can best be revealed by comparison, that is by contrast. It should be said that partial accordance of ideas does not always mean agreement with Spinoza's system and, without further proof, does not at all guarantee direct derivation.

It has been said, erroneously, that the *Histoire* is alive with passages in which Spinozism is attacked, either directly or indirectly.¹⁴ Basnage was not sufficiently interested and versed in philosophy for such an effect. But the passages presented on Spinoza, although in a negative setting, spread his ideas at an early stage over a wide area and far from his home country. This too is an aspect of the reception history. In the following we will not discuss reviews of works from our periodical from which we do not learn anything relevant for the history of Spinozism, like Basnage's articles on Jean Le Clerc's *Ars Critica* and on his edition of *Genesis*. The passages will be treated with their chronology as starting-point, but not too strictly: when an author or theme will recur further on, we shall look ahead.

At the beginning of this search through the twenty-four small volumes of the *Histoire* we meet the famous exegete Richard Simon. His *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament* had been published in 1678 with a preface in which the critical method used in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was accepted, but the conclusions, "consequences fausses et pernicieuses", were not. As Paul Auvray has said, Simon's study had been completed when he first read the *Tractatus*, which did not move him to any important alterations. At most, he made some additions, such as a paragraph on Aben Ezra.¹⁵ Long after the intervention by Bossuet, the ban on Simon's book in France and a great deal of polemic, a young doctor of the Sorbonne, abbé Louis-

¹⁴ According to L. van Lieshout, in: *Henri Basnage de Beauval*, ed. Bots, II, p. 99 note 100.

¹⁵ P. Auvray, "Richard Simon et Spinoza", in: *Religion, Erudition et Critique à la fin du XVII^e siècle et au début du XVIII^e* (Paris, 1968), p. 201-214 and *Richard Simon 1638-1712. Étude bio-bibliographique avec des textes inédits* (Paris, 1974), p. 39-66, 76-92 and *passim*. See also Jacques Le Brun, "Vingt-quatre lettres inédites de Richard Simon...", *Lias* 20 (1993-1), p. 67-119, especially p. 84-85 and *Lias* 20 (1993-2), p. 321.

Ellies Du Pin, took the matter in hand by opening the first part of his *Nouvelle Bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques* in 1686 with a “Dissertation préliminaire” on the Bible, full of attacks on Hobbes, La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon’s *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament*.¹⁶ Simon fought back with a *Dissertation Critique*¹⁷ published under the name of Jean Reuchlin, the great German humanist and father of Christian-Hebrew philology. Already, in a short announcement, Basnage showed that he knew very well who was this “nouveau Reuchlin”.¹⁸ Not so clever really, because the book, said to have been published in “Francfort”, had actually come out at Reinier Leers’, the publisher of Basnage’s periodical in Rotterdam.¹⁹ In his review of Simon’s defence,²⁰ Basnage showed that he understood very well that Simon was now directing at Du Pin an accusation that could be turned on himself, namely “d’avoir luy-même fourny des armes aux Spinosistes, en faisant semblant de les réfuter.” This indeed was the reproach expressed “de toutes parts” on Simon’s opus magnum. Did Basnage agree with those reproaches? We do not know what he thought at the time, but some nine years later he wrote to Hans Sloane

A l’égard de quelques ecrits contre la bible, ie n’en connois point qui ayent faits directement contre la bible [sic]. Mais il y en a quelques uns qui l’attaquent indirectement. Par exemple la *Critique du V. Testament* du P. Simon. Il a copié beaucoup de remarques critiques du *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* de Spinoza.²¹

A completely different view from Bayle’s, who had reviewed several of Simon’s works quite benevolently in his *Nouvelles*.²²

¹⁶ Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1954), p. 196; Auvray, *Richard Simon*, p. 157-158.

¹⁷ *Dissertation critique sur la nouvelle bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques où l’on établit en même temps la vérité de quelques principes qu’on a avancés dans l’Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (Francfort, 1688).

¹⁸ *HOS* April 1688, Article 13, p. 545-546.

¹⁹ O.S. Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers, uitgever en boekverkooper te Rotterdam (1654-1714)...* (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1983), p. 217, no. 19.

²⁰ *HOS* May 1688, Article 15, p. 122-127.

²¹ Bots & Van Lieshout, *Contribution*, p. 134-135.

²² Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle. II, Hétérodoxie et rigorisme* (The Hague, 1964), p. 324-326. For tactical reasons Bayle objected to criticism on “difficultéz” presented by Spinoza on the books of Moses when this opinion was shared by “les plus habiles gens de notre communion”, for instance Richard Simon. Such rash critics “donnent par là occasion aux Spinosistes d’établir leurs sentimens avec plus de force”. Cf. *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, December 1686, Article 7, p. 1454-1455.

Basnage devoted two articles to *De la Véritable religion* by Michel Le Vassor, at the time still a Roman Catholic and an Oratorian, but who later became an Anglican. This was another work in which Simon was linked with Spinoza.²³ Simon reacted by means of an *Apologie*,²⁴ published by Leers in Rotterdam, said to have been written by a “proche parent”, his nephew, but this work was not reviewed in Basnage’s periodical. In the feature “Extraits de diverses Lettres” a correspondent said that Simon had been rather unkindly treated by “son ançien confrere”—in 1678 Simon had been expelled from the Oratoire and in 1690 Le Vassor would leave the congregation—but that this was probably not to everyone’s contentment.²⁵ Basnage himself, who found the book of enough importance to devote a double article to it, yet condemned the author’s fanaticism. “Sa colere, qui merite le nom de zèle, lui fait quelquefois negliger le soin de ses raisons”. Bayle’s reference to Le Vassor in the article “Spinoza” in the *Dictionnaire* some years later did not mention such errors in reasoning.²⁶ Neither did he comment on Le Vassor’s habit of haughtily putting aside the treatment of essential questions. Basnage stated without much ado: “Il évite absolument cette savante question...”, “dans cette vuë il fait semblant de ne s’embarrasser pas beaucoup...”. It seems as if Basnage now and then enjoyed himself by tripping up the learned Reverend, for instance by the statement that Le Vassor elaborately discussed the Jewish ceremonies, but that he avoided treating the Roman Catholic liturgy.

People hovering between belief and disbelief are easily persuaded to choose the latter by the appearance of some “dangereux Savans” who lay down daring suppositions about the books of Moses and the inspiration of the authors of the Bible books. Such men of learning pretend to be only interested in the restoration of the biblical text, but their real purpose is to “[fournir] des armes à l’incrédulité”. These “libertins” should be disarmed. In this way Basnage correctly rendered Le Vassor’s meaning, an intention based on misunder-

²³ *De la Véritable religion...* (Paris, 1688). *HOS*, “Extraits des diverses lettres” (in the following *Extr.*) November 1688, 327; January 1689, p. 539. Review: March 1689, article 10, p. 80-90; April 1689, article 1, 97-111. See on *De la Véritable religion*: Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 155-159; Auvray, *Richard Simon*, p. 73-74.

²⁴ *Apologie Pour l’Auteur De l’Histoire Critique Du Vieux Testament, Contre les faussetés d’un Libelle publié par Michel le Vassor...* (Rotterdam, 1689).

²⁵ *HOS* November 1688, p. 327.

²⁶ Remarque M.

standing and insinuation. Le Vassor challenged Simon, Le Clerc and—sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly—Spinoza. “Fort vigoureusement”, Simon’s “système des Ecrivains publics” was attacked and also, the journalist stated, Le Clerc’s *Traité de l’Inspiration*, “dont le poison est assez subtil”.²⁷ Here Le Vassor’s suspicion intruded into Basnage’s article, yet he did not allow himself to be impressed by his “declamations un peu bien vehementes”. He soberly concluded that Le Vassor is inconsistent where he acknowledges the restrictions of his arguments, but does not adapt the purpose of his book:

ses argumens appuyez sur l’autorité de Jesus-Christ & de la tradition, ne sont point decisifs contre les incredules & les sectateurs de Spinoza, qui sont pourtant le principal objet de son entreprise & de ses desseins.

From a more general perspective, the importance of these lines is that without holding the truth of the Christian faith for something disputable, they do not see the falsehood of other convictions as being dependent on the basic principles of the first truth.

Basnage stated that Le Vassor had followed the scheme, “le plan”, of Jacques Abbadie’s *Traité de la verité de la religion chrétienne* in many places. He skeptically left it to others to decide whether the same “profondeur” had been achieved. He said that Le Vassor started from the demonstrability of God’s existence: “on peut être Athée par le Coeur, mais on ne peut pas l’être par l’esprit”. Atheists are usually converted on their deathbeds: hence Spinoza, “le Heros des Athées”, gave orders not to admit any minister when he should find himself in those circumstances. Le Vassor had picked up this legend from Bayle’s *Pensées Diverses*, which had been brought out six years before.²⁸ Le Vassor’s idea that unanimity of all peoples in all times would prove God’s existence was a reasonable one in Basnage’s opinion. With interest he summed up arguments against Spinoza’s view that religion is a prejudice produced by education and political need for power: “Spinoza a beau dire...”, but prejudices of education and politics change, whereas the principle of a wise Spirit control-

²⁷ See on the question whether Le Clerc was the author of *Traité de l’Inspiration*, M.C. Pitassi, *Entre croire et savoir. Le problème de la méthode antique chez Jean Le Clerc* (Leiden, 1987), p. 17 and 114-115 note 99. Several authors of this period, Catholics as well as Protestants, called Le Clerc a hypocrite. Cf. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 77.

²⁸ Paragraph 181.

ling the world is unchangeably present in everybody's consciousness. Monarchs have made use of religion, but they have not invented it. In spite of Epicurus' "Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor", it is said that in times of emergency people learn to pray, but that this does not create religion. Basnage reported all this without any critical comment, including Le Vassor's physico-theological view that the form of an insect and the movement of the stars exclude "hasard ou une nature aveugle".

Once it had been determined that the world has a beginning and that there is a Creator, Le Vassor presented the subject of Revelation, God's correction and completion of natural religion. The treatment of Moses and his miracles led towards a hard confrontation with the ideas of Spinoza, who thought that the Jews, primitive as they were and spellbound by the thought of being the chosen, attributed everything they did not understand to miracles. An impossibility, because the laws of nature cannot be changed: one miracle would unbalance "toute la machine", as the reviewer formulated it. A "philosophie bizarre & ridicule" was Le Vassor's verdict and Basnage agreed with him, a notion "qui place Dieu dans l'indifférence & dans l'oisiveté". Natural laws can be suspended for a while, because not all natural things are so closely bound up that a deviation of one of them would upset the total system. It should be admitted that there has been fraud concerning miracles, but those of Moses were real...

On the delicate problem of Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch, Le Vassor wielded the authoritative argument of its confirmation by the Jewish tradition, by Jesus and by the apostles. Basnage noticed that he reacted to concrete textual problems by means of answers that had been given before. As examples he presented Moses' burial, explained as a conclusion of the Pentateuch, worthy of the great leader, created by Samuel—Basnage should have said Joshua—and the passage on the kings in Edom²⁹ as an effect of Moses' prophetic foresight. Basnage's reaction revealed his point of view and also that he saw through Le Vassor. If additions are admitted, he said, and history changes into prophesy, the authenticity of any work will become unprovable. In spite of all his trumpeting, Le Vassor's defence of the Scriptures contained too many compromises for

²⁹ Genesis 36:31; *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in: *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1972), 4 vols., III p. 122 (108), lines 1-2.

Basnage. But Le Vassor's orthodox basic idea that prophets are augurs of the future, although not literally, which is diametrically opposed to Spinoza's idea, understandably did not meet with suspicion from this reviewer.

A third author in Basnage's periodical who critically linked Simon with Spinoza was Johannes Henricus Maius, a professor at Giessen.³⁰ Basnage reported that in his *Dissertationes Sacrae*³¹ it was said that Simon "a pris son système de Spinosa; & qu'en feignant de le combattre il appuye ses impietez". A similar insinuation as was uttered by Le Vassor. Maius also wrote on Simon's *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament*, but Basnage included only a short announcement of this book by the conservative Lutheran who adhered to a rigorously literal inspiration concept.³²

An interesting item which Basnage published in the first year of the *Histoire* and which we have waited to discuss until now, is a "Memoire de Mr. Bernier sur le Quietisme des Indes".³³ The Gassendist François Bernier's *Suite des Mémoires sur l'Empire du grand Mogol* was quoted extensively by Bayle in Remarque A of the article "Spinoza" in the *Dictionnaire*. His memoir dealt with Brahmins, their asceticism and merging into the world soul. Mostly, this mystical unity was no more than 'fourberie', the traveller Bernier had discovered. That "grande ame du monde" which Bayle would link to Spinoza's doctrine of the one substance in 1697, he found to be more or less an atheist notion. Because:

ne pouvant faire cette ame que corporelle, que quelque espece de flamme ou de lumiere très-subtile, [...] ils lui donnent des parcelles ou parties, c'est faire Dieu corporel, & par consequence divisible, corruptible, &c. ce qui repugne à la souveraine & absolue perfection de Dieu.

Basnage did not add any comment to this entry.

What next could have been a highlight in Basnage's reports on

³⁰ See on Johann Heinrich Majus (1653-1719): *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 20 (Leipzig, 1884), p. 123.

³¹ *Dissertationes Sacrae, in quibus selectiora V.T. oracula [...] ita explicantur, ut [...] autores Sandius, Huetius, P.R. Simon [...] examinentur ac refutentur...* (Francofurti et Wetzlariae, 1690). Review in *HOS* July 1691, article 10, p. 504-507.

³² Cf. Bots & Van Lieshout, *Contribution*, p. 57 and note 25.

³³ *HOS* September 1688, article 5, p.47-52; *Extr.* September 1688, p.135: obituary of Bernier. See on François Bernier: *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française* 6, cols. 111-112; Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 349, 354.

the developments around Spinozism, a review of Christophorus Wittichius' *Anti-Spinoza*,³⁴ is, as has been said before,³⁵ a disappointing article. This verdict, however, does not take into account in how little time it was written. Jaques Bernard pondered for over two years on his impressive review in Jean Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*; Basnage reacted while the ink of this difficult book was still wet, as an academic journalist *avant la lettre*. As such he went for heavily accentuated characteristics and some random selections, too few to give Wittichius' treatment of the *Ethica* its due. Spinoza's attack on the traditional image of God is immediately compared with a deed like that of Herostratos, and the existence of a Spinozist sect "qui a bien de secrets partisans" is considered as the effect of a need to deviate from "la route du vulgaire" by losing oneself in vain in "l'obscurité mystérieuse" of Spinoza's system. From David Hassel's "Praefatio" to the posthumous work,³⁶ he points to the proposition that among other things Spinoza's doctrine of "un certain esprit, *mentem*, qui remuë toutes choses" had been expounded at length by classical philosophers.

From Basnage himself there was a mention of the daring book by Jean-Baptiste Stoupe, of the anti-Spinozist polemic by Frans Kuyper—not very good according to the reviewer—and of polemics by Henry More and Regnerus van Mansvelt, which he liked much better. He pictured Wittichius as a "Cartesien consommé" whose reasonings would not be understood by everyone. They follow the *Ethica* step by step, which turns the *Anti-Spinoza* into a book that cannot be summarized. As an example of Spinoza's mathematical argumentation the propositions 5, 6, 8 of *Ethica* I are summed up—the review rendered a number of *Ethica* fragments correctly, but in an unfavourable context—from which propositions 14 and 15 are derived regardless of the gap. Then the reviewer offered the conclusion as a kind of residue from the end of the scholium to proposition 15 "que Dieu n'est autre chose que la matiere & qu'il n'y a qu'une substance unique". With a glance further on in the book Basnage

³⁴ *Anti-Spinoza Sive Examen Ethices Benedicti de Spinoza, Et Commentarius De Deo Et ejus attributis* (Amstelodami, 1690). *HOS* December 1689, article 4, p. 165-174; *Extr.* November 1689, p. 141. Titles with "anti" were usual at the time: *Anti-Baillet...*, *Anti-Cappel...*

³⁵ Cf. Lenie van Lieshout, in: *Henri Basnage de Beauval*, ed. Bots, II, p. 90; De Vet, "La Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique", p. 91.

³⁶ See on this "Praefatio" and its author, De Vet, "La Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique", p. 91-93.

added that of the One Substance “toutes les creatures sont autant de modifications differentes”. Triumphantly he concluded that Wittichius destroys “toute la machine” by demonstrating that Spinoza’s axioms are not evident. How this works and what these axioms are is never said.

Often the meaning and intention of Spinoza’s propositions can hardly be understood, said Basnage. The philosopher uses a conventional terminology in a misleading way and he is unscrutably obscure, because he conceals half of what he thinks. For example, proposition 17 of Book I seems to be orthodox, but is so only formally, because Spinoza’s God “n’agit point par une intelligence & une volonté superieure aux causes secondes, & qu’il suit invariablement le cours & le mouvement de la nature, qui est lui-même”. Spinoza neatly distinguishes between “agir necessairement” and “agir librement”, said Basnage, but sometimes he mixes them up, “comme si l’ame n’étoit [...] qu’un automate spirituel: ne faisant ainsi consister la liberté qu’à ceder sans contrainte, & sans s’appercevoir de la necessité par laquelle on est emporté”. In this context Basnage also mentioned proposition 33 of Book I on the impossibility for God to produce another creation than the existing one.

After this Basnage skips a good deal of Wittichius’ book and after a short characterization of man’s subordination to his passions—“l’ame toujours esclave des sens & des passions”, “l’ame [...] selon Spinoza [...] d’une même substance avec le corps...”—he brings up Wittichius’ reaction to the Preface of Book V. On Spinoza’s criticism of Descartes’ theory on the pineal gland in connection with the unity of body and mind, it is said that we do not know and need not know how exactly God formed this, but that it is clear, for instance, that great agitation of the “esprits animaux” destabilizes the power of the mind over the body. Back to the Appendix of Book I and to proposition 55 of Book III. Basnage writes on Wittichius’ opinion on the statement that everything exists because of man and that man exists because of God’s honour (which Spinoza rejected completely): God does not know a “fin de besoin”, does not need our praise, but manifests His supremacy. On behalf of Wittichius, Basnage calls the idea that repentance is not a virtue, since it does not result from reasoning but from sadness, a “pernicieuse Morale” and Spinoza’s argument of the virtuous man who is afflicted by catastrophes invalid, because it is in conflict with God’s sovereignty and wisdom. Basnage finishes his article with a few notes on the *Commentarius De Deo*,

Ejusque Natura & Essentia, which Wittichius had added.

Now back to the early nineties in which Basnage's *Histoire*, apart from Majus' book, presented two more works that were of significance for Spinozism. The Minim Friar Jacques Salier discussed in his *Historia Scholastica de Speciebus Eucharisticis*³⁷ the theory of pre-existent matter, according to Tertullian coeternal and co-operating with God. "On voit bien que cela mene droit à l'Atheisme," Basnage reported, "& Spinoza ne supposoit d'autre Divinité que cette matiere premiere". Pierre-Sylvain Régis' *Système de philosophie*,³⁸ a handbook of late Cartesianism with great authority, is the other book with implications for Spinozism presented by Basnage in this phase. It is characteristic of him that he chose to discuss from the part on metaphysics the very chapter "contre l'absurde & monstrueuse opinion des Spinozistes" and equally characteristic that he did not comment on Régis' supposed refutation of Spinoza. In Basnage's words: "Tout autre esprit fini est incapable tant de produire lui-même, que de produire ou d'autres esprits, ou des corps. Il reste donc que l'être infini, c'est-à-dire Dieu, soit la cause efficiente & des corps, & des esprits".

After an interruption of some years, there was again a growing interest in Spinoza in the *Histoire*. Basnage spoke with respect about *Het voor-hof der heydenen voor alle Ongeloovigen geopent* (The forecourt of the gentiles opened for all unbelievers) by Salomon van Til, professor of the Illustre School in Dordrecht,³⁹ although he did not conceal that the militant professor sometimes "allegue l'autorité de Moïse, pour prouver l'autorité de Moïse", and that the subject chosen, the divine nature of the Pentateuch, had been treated so often that there were arguments that had been presented before. That was also the case in Basnage's review. For instance, Moses' gift of prophecy as a solution for the kings of Edom he provided with the comment: "C'est [...] convertir la narration historique en prophétie", the same reaction as in his article on Le Vassor. Even though it was not mentioned explicitly, there were quite a few subjects from the *Trac-*

³⁷ (Paris, 1689); review in *HOS*, September 1690, article 2, p. 13-22. See on Jacques Salier (1615-1707): *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* 43 (Paris, 1864), col. 178; Bayle *Dictionnaire*, article "Spinoza" Remarque A.

³⁸ (Paris, 1690); review in *HOS*, January 1691, article 10, p. 225-234. See on Pierre-Sylvain Régis: Paul Mouy, *Le développement de la physique cartésienne...* (Paris, 1934), p. 145-167; Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 253-254.

³⁹ (Dordrecht, 1694); *HOS* March 1696, article 3, 314-327. See on Salomon van Til: *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 10 (Leiden, 1937), col. 1027-1029.

tatus Theologico-Politicus that were brought up, for instance Spinoza's reproach of an anthropomorphic image of God. Without any critical comment Basnage took down Van Til's idea about God's physical manifestations: "le corps qui en étoit l'instrument sensible, ne faisoit point partie de la Divinité." Spinoza's name was mentioned in the report Basnage made of Van Til's reaction to the theory of the destruction of the books of Moses during the Babylonian captivity or the tyranny of Antiochus.

In the same issue we also find Basnage's review of the first edition of Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*.⁴⁰ He ignored the presence of passages on Spinoza outside the article "Spinoza", and of the article itself he merely remarked that it contained not only "plusieurs faits touchant ce fameux impie", but also "une longue & forte refutation de son système". Basnage's review on the second edition of the *Dictionnaire*⁴¹ had even less on Spinoza, in fact absolutely nothing. There was a more important note in the "Eloge de Mr. Bayle",⁴² published in the *Histoire* after the death of the philosopher and written by Henri's brother, the vicar Jacques Basnage. It referred to the accusation—by whom exactly?—that the *Dictionnaire* would be the work of a libertine: "On dit qu'il alloit jusqu'au Spinosisme". Jacques Basnage protested: "Au contraire il n'approuvoit point les absurditez du système de Spinoza; il l'a réfuté solidement, & le tenoit insupportable, & monstrueux". Jacques Basnage pointedly remarked that it was Bayle's strategy to take up vulnerable positions, for instance in the article "Pauliciens",⁴³ in order to prove "qu'une secte ridicule peut faire des objections, dont il est très-difficile de sortir & de se débarrasser". The periodical, however, also contained less subtle remarks on Bayle and Spinoza. Henri Basnage, for instance, once copied from Bayle's *Réponse aux Questions d'un Provincial* the cliché representation of a Spinoza "qui ne croioit ni Dieu ni Diable".⁴⁴

In volume 1696 we also find Basnage's long and appreciative review of the four *Dissertations sur l'existence de Dieu* by Isaac Jaquelot, a Walloon vicar in The Hague.⁴⁵ Bayle praised the article as "un bon

⁴⁰ (Rotterdam, 1697), 2 vols.; *HOS* July 1696, article 6 [sic: 7] p. 491-509.

⁴¹ (Rotterdam, 1702); *HOS* November 1701, article 3, p. 465-492.

⁴² *HOS* December 1706, article 9, p. 545-556.

⁴³ Further this article contains strong condemnations of Spinoza's doctrine.

⁴⁴ (Rotterdam, 1704; 4th edition), 2 parts; *HOS* July and August 1703, article 2, p. 316-343, especially 320 being a rendition of *Réponse* I, Chapitre 35.

⁴⁵ (La Haye, 1697); *HOS* September 1696, article 3, p. 16-39; *Extr.* August 1696,

extrait",⁴⁶ even though the reviewer had concentrated more on the first two treatises, as he said himself, "plus spécialement les productions propres de Mr. Jaquelot" than on the other ones. Treatise II, a "réfutation du système d'Epicure et de Spinoza", is clearly Cartesian and owes much to Wittichius.⁴⁷ Bayle had a critical opinion of it in a letter of 1696, but in 1703 he was more laudatory in *Mémoires de Trévoux*.⁴⁸ Basnage stated with Jaquelot that Spinoza, "lequel a ressuscité le système d'Epicure", escaped from refutation by using "termes équivoques". Further, he rendered the following argument: he who does not accept a "substance spirituelle, & distincte de la matiere", will have to assume that matter in its condition of primal chaos "avant qu'elle eût reçu tant de diverses modifications", would have known itself: "une absurdité que Spinoza ne voudroit pas adopter". And the reverse, how could matter have produced man, "un être pensant, & raisonnant", of a higher level than itself, if it had not had any mental powers of its own. We should mention another manifestation of Jaquelot. As a convinced Cartesian he defended Descartes' ontological proof for the existence of God, assisted by Bernard Lamy, first against Professor Samuel Werenfels of Basel,⁴⁹ afterwards against the journalist Pierre Des Maizeaux,⁵⁰ in a long polemic which was partly taken up in Basnage's *Histoire*.⁵¹ This proof was characterized by him as an argumentation, "qui ne paroît un sophisme qu'à cause de sa grande clarté, & parce que Dieu est le seul être qui renferme son existence dans sa propre essence".⁵² Jaquelot was a man who held his ground. He fought against Bayle for the reasonableness of faith and against Spinoza for the sanctity of

p. 540-541 and June 1698, p. 279. See on Isaac Jaquelot: *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 2 (Leiden, 1912), col. 633 and Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 64-68.

⁴⁶ *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, article "Spinoza", Remarque P.

⁴⁷ Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ Bayle, *Ecrits sur Spinoza*, p. 155-156, 162.

⁴⁹ See on Samuel Werenfels (1657-1740): *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 42 (Leipzig, 1897), p. 5-8. Werenfels did not engage in a polemic against Spinoza, who with arguments sometimes the same as those of Descartes had further consolidated the ontological argument. Cf. Errol E. Harris, *Salvation from Despair...* (The Hague, 1973), p. 41-45.

⁵⁰ See on Pierre des Maizeaux (1673-1745): Joseph Almagor, *Pierre des Maizeaux [...], journalist and English correspondent for Franco-Dutch periodicals...* (Amsterdam-Maarssen, 1989); concerning the ontological proof for the existence of God p. 28-36.

⁵¹ *HOS* May 1700, article 5, p. 192-222; May 1701, article 8, p. 226-229; September 1701, article 13, p. 420-429.

⁵² *HOS* September 1701, p. 420.

Moses' books. He kept defending their sacred character until he broke down, as Basnage wrote to Bignon.⁵³ The journalist also reported the publication of Halma's translation of part of Jaquelot's *Dissertations*, published together with Halma's Dutch rendition of Bayle's Spinoza article.⁵⁴ Jaquelot's death was commemorated in the *Histoire* with an "Eloge" at the end of which his preparation of the posthumously published *Traité de la vérité et de l'inspiration des livres du Vieux et du Nouveau testament* was mentioned.⁵⁵ A letter from an anonymous writer soon informed the readers of the *Histoire* that the book would be directed among other things against "le système de Hobbes, & de Spinoza, Patriarches modernes des Libertins & des Athées". An explication was added: "Ce système suppose un monde de toute éternité, & des temps où les hommes sont venus comme des champignons, & où ils ont commencé leurs societez, & leurs établissemens par un état de guerre semblable à celui des champions, qui sortirent des dents du serpent, semées par Cadmus".⁵⁶

In its early as well as in its later years, the *Histoire* remained of importance for the world of learning through its announcements of newly published books in the *Extraits*, even though not all these works were reviewed. On Spinoza we find announced in these years François Lamy's *Le Nouvel athéisme renversé*⁵⁷ as well as *Deism Examin'd and Confuted* by the English "School-Master" Matthias Earbury⁵⁸ and Samuel Clarke's *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: more particularly in answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza and their followers*.⁵⁹

At a certain moment there was also a picture in the *Histoire* of Leibniz in connection with Spinoza. A letter by the former

⁵³ Cf. Bots & Van Lieshout, *Contribution*, p. 182. Lettre 92, 1-11-[1709].

⁵⁴ A. van der Linde, *Benedictus Spinoza Bibliografie* (Nieuwkoop, 1965; 2nd ed.), no. 70.

⁵⁵ HOS December 1708, article 11, p. 528-533. *Traité de la vérité...* was published at Rotterdam in 1715.

⁵⁶ HOS March 1709, article 9, "Lettre à l'Auteur..." p. 123-132; quoted p. 130-131.

⁵⁷ HOS February 1697, p. 280, *Extr.*, announcement of *Le Nouvel athéisme renversé, ou Réfutation du système de Spinoza...* (Paris, 1696).

⁵⁸ HOS May 1697, p. 426, *Extr.*, announcement of *Deism Examin'd and Confuted. In an answer to a book entitled, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Van der Linde, *Spinoza*, no. 370.

⁵⁹ HOS March 1708, p. 140. *Extr.*, announcement of *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God...* (London, 1705). See on Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, 10 (Paris, 1855), col. 670-674.

addressed to Basnage for publication in his journal dealt among other things with the lemma “Zenon d’Elée” in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*. It is praised because where space and movement are discussed, this “s’accorde mieux avec mon système qu’avec tout autre”. All in all, Leibniz discovered “plus de raison”, more reason, concerning the problems mentioned in various philosophical schools than he had expected: “Le peu de réalité substantielle des choses sensibles des Sceptiques; la réduction de tout aux harmonies, ou nombres, idées & perceptions des Pythagoristes & Platoniciens; l’un & même en tout de Parménide & de Plotin, sans aucun Spinozisme...”. One interesting detail: admitting Spinozism would have harmed reason here, according to Leibniz.⁶⁰

Another interesting passage, but one that does give Spinoza’s system a chance to justify itself, occurred in the review written by Jacques Basnage of Samuel Werenfels’ *Dissertatio de logomachiis eruditorum...*⁶¹ We read here concerning the poor quality of many polemics against Spinoza: “Combien de gens croient avoir triomphé de Spinoza, qui ne lui ont pas seulement tiré une goutte de sang, ni donné la moindre atteinte à ses principes qu’ils n’entendent pas”. Bayle had been such a poor polemic, said Boulainviller later: it was mentioned by the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, an eighteenth century periodical that came out in Amsterdam.⁶²

Opposing atheism–Epicurianism as it was often called in the *Histoire*—was what Basnage was interested in. Hence the double review of great length he devoted to the two volumes of *The Living Temple* by John Howe,⁶³ which defended among other things the idea that “Spinosa a réduit l’athéisme en système”, an echo of Bayle. Howe was concerned with impiety as a result of atheism in its full scope, of which he saw Spinozism as a manifestation. Although Howe’s combat was favourably reviewed by the journalist, it had little news value for Basnage anno 1702: “nous en avons si souvent parlé”. He saw more of interest in that part of Howe’s book where

⁶⁰ *HOS* July 1698, article 5, “Lettre de Mr. Leibnits à l’Auteur...”, p. 329-342.

⁶¹ *HOS* February 1702, article 5, p. 43-55, review of *Dissertatio de logomachiis eruditorum...* (Amsterdam, 1702).

⁶² *Bibliothèque Raisonnée Des Ouvrages des Savans De L’Europe* 29 (Amsterdam, 1742), p. 131.

⁶³ *HOS* April 1702, article 4, p. 181-195 and July 1702, article 3, p. 325-341, review of *The Living Temple...* (London, 1702), 2 vols., Van der Linde, *Spinoza*, no. 390. See on John Howe (1630-1705): *Dictionary of National Biography* 10 (London, 1908), p. 85-88.

latent Spinozism was challenged in *L'impie Convaincu* by the Socinian Aubert de Versé.⁶⁴ Philosophers who take the standpoint that nothing can originate from nothing meet an insoluble problem in the creation of the world. In *L'impie convaincu* this is solved, as Basnage said, by the assumption of the existence for all eternity of “une masse de matiere informe & confuse; capable seulement de toutes les formes & de toutes les impressions qu’il plairait à Dieu de lui donner”. The early Christians and even Moses would have believed this. Howe found this even more unacceptable than the one substance of Spinoza, because this new theory amounted to the assumption of two equivalent substances: God and matter. If God could not have created this pre-existent matter, a matter which owes its existence to itself and as such is equal to God, then how could He have transformed the primal chaos, extracting from it the stars and finally man? Pre-existent matter is incompatible with God’s omnipotence, thought Howe. In support he posed and answered the question whether God could have created more worlds from it, and Basnage summarized this passage as follows:

Si on repond que non, il n’est donc pas tout-puissant; & si on repond qu’il le peut, il [=Howe] demande encore, si cette matiere premiere suffiroit pour servir à la formation de ces nouveaux mondes. Est-ce un fond inépuisable? & Dieu en peut-il tirer des mondes à l’infini? On voit bien que cela est absurde.

Notwithstanding this repudiating conclusion, there is a moment in Basnage’s article on Howe in which the picture appears of “un authentique disciple de Spinoza”: Aubert de Versé—the characterization is Vernière’s.

About a year later there was a comparable moment: a glance at Johannes Bredenburg, a member of the Collegiant movement, who was fascinated by Spinoza.⁶⁵ Basnage wrote about him:

en confessant qu’il s’en tient à la Religion Chretienne, [il] declare pourtant que les argumens de Spinoza convainquent sa raison, & qu’il est fâché qu’elle se trouve en contradiction si formelle avec la religion.

⁶⁴ *L'impie convaincu, ou dissertation contra Spinoza...* (Amsterdam, 1684). See on Noël Aubert de Versé (1654 ? -1714): Jean Sgard, *Dictionnaire des Journalistes...* (Grenoble, 1976), p. 370-371, Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 81-89 and L. van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg (1643-1691). Een Rotterdamse collegiant in de ban van Spinoza* (Rotterdam, 1990), p. 200-205 and *passim*.

⁶⁵ See Van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg*, p. 204-208.

These words are derived from the *Histoire* article on Ishak Orobio's *Certamen Philosophicum* (1684), of which a new edition was published posthumously in 1703.⁶⁶ Orobio wrote against Bredenburg's *Wiskundige Demonstratie* (Mathematical Demonstration), which had been sent to him.⁶⁷ Basnage reported that Orobio opposed the one-sidedness of Bredenburg's "il ne se fait rien de rien", from which it would follow that God did not create the world.

Il [= Orobio] sçait que le rien ne peut devenir quelque chose; mais cette repugnance, & cette contradiction prétenduë n'est que dans les termes: car il n'y a nulle distance, nulle resistance du néant à l'être, puisque le neant n'occupe aucun lieu, & n'a nulle disposition à exister. En disant que Dieu a créé ou fait le monde de rien, l'on n'entend pas que le rien ait été la matiere premiere, & qu'il se soit fait une transformation, & une conversion de neant à l'être.

Moses' statement on the creation implies that the world did not yet exist, "point encore", and not that there was a "matiere préexistente & coéternelle" as a raw material for God. Orobio calls it an error to apply to God what is valid for man: "ex nihilo nihil fit", for God is almighty.

Further, Basnage reported that Orobio resisted the idea that a being must act, so that the world must exist perennially because "l'Agent universel, ou le premier Agent, n'a pu demeurer une éternité dans l'oisiveté & dans l'inaction". His way of thinking: "La creation est nouvelle, & le plan en est éternel". Finally Basnage informed his readers that Orobio did not at all exclude "en bonne Physique la pluralité de substances". But is the Eternal Being also a substance? "C'est ce que personne ne peut décider".

Colerus' biography of Spinoza was also reviewed in the *Histoire*, that is, the French version published in The Hague by T. Johnson.⁶⁸ The article began with the cliché of Spinoza as a new Herostratus, reported that the philosopher in the first place would have become well-known through his opponents and gave a wrong year for his death: 1678. The image of Spinoza as an honest, austere man was

⁶⁶ *HOS* May 1703, article 10, p. 236-241, Van der Linde, *Spinoza*, no. 108, 209.

⁶⁷ Van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg*, p. 230-231, note 69.

⁶⁸ *HOS* December 1705, article 8, p. 548-553; Van der Linde, *Spinoza*, no. 89.

aptly pictured by Basnage. The myths refuted by Colerus, such as the philosopher's prohibition to admit a minister at his deathbed, described earlier in the *Histoire*, were reported in detail.

After this tour through the twenty-four volumes of the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans* it may be said that this periodical offers an interesting panorama of the development of Spinozism, observed by a journalist who had little philosophical baggage. Spinoza was nearly always opposed. In a few articles—in particular those on Le Vassor, Werenfels, Howe (Aubert de Versé), Orobio (Bredenburg)—there are, however, passages that could inform the world of the continuation of Spinoza's heritage as a living philosophy.

SPINOZA IN ZEELAND: THE GROWTH AND SUPPRESSION OF 'POPULAR SPINOZISM' (c. 1700-1720)

Michiel Wielema

Recent studies have shown that in the Netherlands, Spinoza's home country, his ideas were taken up and propagated at a very early stage, sometimes even before they were published.¹ His views on the identity of God and nature, on the absolute necessity of all things, on reason as the way to truth and salvation, as well as his Biblical criticism, provoked lengthy discussions within small groups of dissenters such as the Mennonites and Collegiants. One famous example of this is, of course, the series of Bredenburg debates. But even within strict Calvinism, Spinoza's philosophy seems to have met with sympathy, as can be seen from the cases of the Koerbagh brothers or Johannes Duijkerius, all of whom were members of the Reformed Church. Many more instances could be given, but it is clear that soon after his death Spinoza's ideas had become part and parcel of Dutch intellectual life. It is also clear, however, that as these ideas spread, opposition to them increased. While the earlier refutations of Spinoza had come mainly from Cartesians, whose moderate stance was being discredited by Spinoza's radicalism, with the decline of Cartesianism itself the threat of Spinozism took on a new dimension. It was no longer the acceptability of Cartesianism that was at stake. Many thought that the very foundations of church and state were being undermined by the diffusion and acceptance among large numbers of people of a radically different world-view. Since Spinoza's writings were available in the vernacular, his influence was indeed not likely to remain confined to the learned.

In the Dutch province of Zeeland, which in the 1670's had already been deeply disturbed by religious and political divisions, the gradual spread of heterodox notions in the last two decades of the seventeenth century provoked new fears of instability. In 1683, a

¹ H.J. Siebrand, *Spinoza and the Netherlands. An Inquiry into the Early Reception of His Philosophy of Religion* (Assen-Maastricht, 1988); L. van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg (1643-1691). Een Rotterdamse collegiant in de ban van Spinoza* (Rotterdam, 1990).

famous proponent of heterodox opinions, the Reformed pastor of the village of St. Philipsland, Pontiaan van Hattem (1645-1706), had been removed from office. He was able to continue to teach, however, and had a large following in many local towns and villages. Although he was accused of Spinozism by many of his opponents, the present view is that there were no more than marginal similarities between the two men's systems.² Van Hattem's main object, like that of his antinomian contemporary Jacobus Verschoor (1648-1700) of Vlissingen, was to cleanse the Dutch Reformed Church of one of the last remaining elements of "popery", namely, the belief that salvation was to be gained through obedience to Divine law.³ According to Van Hattem, the atonement achieved through Christ's death has freed us from the law, so that true worship consists in letting God take over our imperfect selves or "nothings" through Christ, and so make us merge into the Divine Absolute. We must be felt to be nothing, while God becomes our all. When we have reached this level of understanding, the concepts of good and evil, sin and retribution lose their meaning, since they have no existence in God. The true church consists of all those who have been united with God. For them, neither finite reason nor the literal meaning of Scripture can be used to settle matters in religious disputes. Van Hattem therefore pleaded for the abolition of all instruments of confessionalism, such as synods and orders, and for complete tolerance.

Even this short summary should make it evident that Van Hattem shared certain important conceptions with Spinoza. Let us concentrate on one of them—the idea of salvation. Both thinkers agree that man can attain salvation by recognising that he is part of the absolute unity of God, or as Spinoza called it, "the unity of the mind

² Van Hattem's theological and philosophical opinions have not yet received the attention they deserve. On his life and career, see W.C. van Manen, "Pontiaan van Hattem. Een bladzijde uit de geschiedenis der gereformeerde kerken", *De Gids* 1885-3, p. 357-429 and 1885-4, p. 84-115 and "De procedure tegen Pontiaan van Hattem", *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kerkgeschiedenis* 1 (1885), p. 273-348. On Van Hattem and Spinoza, see G.C. van Niftrik, *Spinoza en de sectariërs van zijn tijd* (Leiden, 1962). The recent article by A. Roothaan is unconvincing: "Pontiaan van Hattem: een vroege kentheoretische criticus van Spinoza", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 50 (1988), p. 525-535. Cf. A. Roothaan, "Pontiaan van Hattem: critique ou hérétique?", *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), p. 213-227. See also W. Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* (Würzburg, 1987), p. 138-143.

³ On Verschoor and the sect of the "Hebreeën", see M.R. Wielema, "De gehele Schrift voor de gemene man. De gereformeerde beweging der Hebreeën in Leiden (1684-1693)", *Holland, regionaal-historisch tijdschrift* 25 (1993), p. 221-242.

with the whole of Nature". But while Spinoza thought this recognition could only be effected by a few elect thinkers, the masses being led to salvation only by obedience to God's command, it seems to have been Van Hattem's opinion that all could be saved—not by obedience, but by accepting Christ as mediator. Christ has made us aware that God is not a lawgiver, as in the Old Testament, but a loving father, who works all things in us for the final good. Despite his tendency towards a pantheistic view, therefore, Van Hattem stayed close to the traditional conception of a personal God, while Spinoza, although using orthodox words, identified God with Nature.

Since salvation or peace of mind is the ultimate object of both thinkers, despite their differing as to the means of obtaining it, it might be worth asking whether Spinozistic ideas could have found their way into Reformed Christianity in the wake of this Hattemistic critique of established church doctrine. In Van Hattem's own writings, the influence of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is very probably apparent in his acknowledgment of the accommodation thesis, in the idea that Scripture only speaks to the common man, in images derived from nature. But did Van Hattem or his followers accept other, more fundamental Spinozistic ideas? Did Hattemism, as its orthodox opponents claimed, give way in the end to outright Spinozism?

In this paper an attempt is made to answer this question by presenting and analysing one of the main sources of information concerning the Hattemistic movement during the first two decades of the eighteenth century—the six books written by the Middelburg pastor Carolus Tuinman (1659-1728) in refutation of what he called the "Hattemistic libertines", by means of which he attempted to justify their expulsion from the church.⁴ One of these libertines will receive special attention—the Middelburg shoemaker Marinus Booms (d. 1728), who had been acquainted with Van Hattem, and after the latter's death in 1706 was regarded as the head of the movement.⁵

⁴ C. Tuinman, *Johan Kalvjns onderrichting, tegen de dolle en dweepersche Secte der Vrijgeesten* (Middelburg, 1712); *De heillooze Gruwelleere der Vrijgeesten* (Middelburg, 1714); *De liegende en bedriegende Vrijgeest, ontmaskert in een andwoord aan den vermoeden Constantius Prudens* (Middelburg, 1715); *Sibboleth, of Leugen en Bedrog van den vermoeden Vrijgeest Marinus Booms* (Middelburg, 1715); *Het helsche Gruwelgeheim der heillooze Vrijgeesten* (Middelburg, 1717); *Korte afschetsing der ijselijkheden, welke van de Spinozistische Vrijgeesten uiddrukkelijck worden geleert* (Rotterdam, 1719).

⁵ Nearly all information concerning Booms given here, including quotations, is derived from Tuinman's *Sibboleth*. On Booms see also A.W. Wybrands, "Marinus

Nearly all Tuinman's polemics were directed against Booms personally, as well as against his friends. The group answered Tuinman's accusations in a number of pamphlets and letters, many of which were published under pseudonyms.⁶ Luckily, although hardly any of these Hattemistic writings have survived, Tuinman's own books contain many important quotations from them, while some are even quoted in full.⁷ The burning of the extremely important church archives of Middelburg during the last war presents us with a further difficulty. Once again, however, Tuinman comes to our rescue, quoting fully from the minutes of the consistory meetings, dozens of which were devoted entirely to searching out the heretical opinions of Booms and his followers. Consequently, although these sources have to be used with caution, on account of their obvious bias, there is no reason to doubt that the broad outline of Booms' opinions can be reconstructed from them.

Before examining the possible role played by Spinoza's ideas among Booms and his friends, a short account of the events leading up to the publication of Tuinman's books is needed. The available evidence will then be scrutinised, in order to determine the role that Spinoza's books and ideas may have played during this period.

After Van Hattem's removal from office in 1683, his influence

Adriaansz. Booms. Eene bladzijde uit de geschiedenis der spinozisterij in Nederland", *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kerkgeschiedenis* 1 (1885), p. 51-128.

⁶ *Missive dienende tot antwoord aan den Heer N.N. op zijn Weledelheid drieledig verzoek, nopende de Requesten der vier Classes van Zeeland, gepresenteert aan haar Ed. Mog. de Heeren Staaten van den Lande en Graaflijkheid van Zeeland* (S.l., 1713); *Brief van Theophilus, dienende tot andwoord aan den Heer N.N.* (S.l., 1713); Constantius Prudens, *Missive aan den Heer Carolus Tuinman, Predikant tot Middelburg, dienende tot naricht aan zijn Eerw. wegens het gevoelen der zo genaamde Vrijgeesten, door haar zelfs dus voorgesteld in een redenvoering, wegens zijn Eerw. Wederandwoord aan Theophilus* (Altena, 1714); Marinus Booms, *Apologie of Verandwoording: zijnde een waarachtig verhaal van de proceduren der Consistorie van Middelburg, met alle de stukken, zo Beschuldigingen als Andwoorden, daar toe behoorende* (S.l., 1714); Pius Fidelis, *Missive aan den Heer I.M.H.V.H., behelsende eenige aanmerkingen over het boek genaemt de Liegende en Bedriegende Vrijgeest* (Altena, 1715).

⁷ Hattemistic writings frequently cited by Tuinman include the anonymous pamphlets *Drieledig Vertoog, Verhandeling over Matt. 5/6/7*, and *Dat de mensch volstrekt afhankelijk is* (S.l., s.a.); the *Geloofsbelijdenis* (confession of faith) of Marinus Booms, published in full by Tuinman in *Sibboleth*; Jacob Bril, *De Werken* (Amsterdam, 1705); Van Hattem's *Nodig onderzoek ontrent de religie van een eenvoudig man: mitsgaders een eenvoudig onderwijs, om een natuurlijk mensch door Gods genade tot het Christendom, en de verdeelde Christenheijd, tot eenigheijd van Geloof en Geest te brengen* ('s-Gravenhage, 1700); and the first volume of Van Hattem's collected works, *Den val van 's werelts af-god, ofte, het gelooove der heijligen, zege-pralende over de leere van eygen gerechtigheyt, uytgegeven door Mr. Jacob Roggeveen* ('s-Gravenhage, 1718; vols. 2-4 appeared in 1719 and 1727).

spread not only all over Zeeland, but to other areas as well. He never published much, but copies of his manuscripts circulated among his followers. Although he was accused of heresy early on, it seems that he was not in fact accused of Spinozism until 1700, when this charge was levelled at him by Willem Spandaw, pastor of Oudelande on the island of Zuid-Beveland.⁸ It is interesting to note that the village of Oudelande is close to the hamlet of Driewegen, where Marinus Booms was born, and to which he probably returned occasionally after he had settled in Middelburg, which is the capital of Zeeland and which is situated on the island of Walcheren. The men knew one another, for in 1700 Booms invited Spandaw to his Middelburg home in order to debate the latter's thesis that Van Hattem was a covert Spinozist. It would be interesting to find out whether, after Booms had come into contact with Spinozistic ideas about 1699, his ideas had anything to do with Spandaw's apparently unwarranted charges against Van Hattem. If this is in fact the case, the traditional identification of Hattemism with Spinozism was not originally the result of the way in which Van Hattem was expressing his opinions, but was the result of the activities of his follower Booms. It is certainly remarkable that it was Booms who felt obliged to accept Spandaw's challenge, and not Van Hattem himself.

After settling in Middelburg some time before 1692, Booms soon became known as a Hattemist. He was censured for this by the consistory in 1698, but did not recant his heresies. It was shortly after this that he became familiar with Spinoza's writings, as will be shown in more detail later on. After a number of years, new charges were brought against him, but the matter was not decided until November 1st, 1713, when he was officially charged with both Hattemism *and* Spinozism. Since he was both unable and unwilling to answer these charges, he was deemed an apostate from the Reformed Church on January 31st, 1714, and excommunicated on May 27th. The excommunication took place after he and one of his followers had been banned from the town by the magistrate (March 31st).

In the meantime, in February 1712, another Reformed pastor had been deposed and exiled because of his Hattemistic heresies—he was

⁸ W. Spandaw, *De bedekte Spinosist ontdekt in de persoon van P. van Hattem* (Goes, 1700).

Gosuinus van Buitendijk, pastor of the hamlets of Schore and Vlakte on the island of Zuid-Beveland. As in the case of Van Hattem, the dismissal of Buitendijk made things even worse for the church. He became a travelling preacher, and founded small Hattemistic communities wherever he went. He and Booms became close friends, and together they made many converts to Hattemism. Booms, after leaving Middelburg, settled successively in Vlissingen, Goes and Bergen op Zoom, Van Hattem's birthplace. He was banished from all these towns, and eventually he and Buitendijk settled down and lived quietly in Breda for a number of years. Buitendijk was banished from Breda in 1726, where Booms died two years later.

When we consider these facts, it need cause no surprise that the Reformed Church was gripped during these years by a sort of Hattemistic panic. Unable to stop the spread of these heresies by persuasion and argument, it turned to the authorities to check them by force. During 1713-1714, no less than five requests were made to the States of Zeeland, asking for a ban to be enforced on both the meetings and the writings of the Hattemists.⁹ Many of these writings, it was stated in the requests, were full of "Spinoza's atheism under an Evangelical cloak", as well as "public, formal and direct blasphemies in the highest degree", a "blasphemous derision of the doctrine of the Reformed Church" and "defamation of public worship and church discipline". The Middelburg authorities responded by burning certain pamphlets and exiling Booms, but not much else was done, partly because some government officials were themselves sympathetic towards Hattemism.¹⁰ There was one pitiful victim, however, who did not escape so easily. The Hattemist Steven Kloet, a friend of Booms, was put in jail for three years for maintaining,

⁹ *Twee remonstrantien, door de E. Classis van Walcheren, Schouwen, Tholen en Bergen, overgeleverd aan haar Ed. Mog. Heeren Staten des Lands en Gravelijkheid van Zeeland, rakende de Hattemistische Libertinisterie* (Middelburg, 1713); *Nader Remonstrantie* (Middelburg, 1714); *Andere Remonstrantie* (Middelburg, 1714); *Nieuwe Remonstrantie* (Middelburg, 1714).

¹⁰ Among the Hattemistic booklets burned at the scaffold in Middelburg on March 29th, 1714 were *Tweeledige Apostolische Waarschouwing aan alle geloovige, of onderzoek en verhandeling van 2 Colossen 2:13-23*; *Predikatiën van onzen Zaligmaker op den berg*; *Tzamspraak tusschen een Hollander en Zeelander, aangaande den eenigen waarachtigen God, en Jesus Christus, Korte onderwijzinge, te zamen gesteld met vragen en antwoorden*; *Over den Ephesen*; *Handgeleij tot eene Christelijke Pligtsbetrachting*; *Verklaring van de Tien Geboden Gods*; *De Gereformeerde Belijdenis ontheven van haar hedensdaags misbruik, aangetoont uit den rechten zin van de Catechismus*. A number of these were written by Van Hattem himself and are included in *Den val van 's werelts afgod*.

among other things, that the Bible could be thrown on the fire, since anyone in possession of the "inner word" could write his own Bible. Kloet had also, clearly, identified the God of the Church with the devil. After his release he went to Bergen op Zoom, where he seems to have continued making converts to Hattemism.

This survey will suffice to give an impression of the uproar which Booms and his friends caused in Zeeland, and of the relative forcefulness of the clamp down by the authorities which took place in 1714.¹¹ We now have to examine the evidence for the role played by the works of Spinoza in the formation of the ideas of Booms and his associates. When doing so, it is useful to distinguish two categories of evidence—direct and indirect. The one consists of reports and statements, both by Hattemists themselves and by the church authorities, concerning the local circulation of Spinoza's writings and other Spinozistic works, and the way in which they were received by the libertine audience. The other kind of evidence, which is rather more circumstantial but also more interesting, consists of similarities in expressions and ideas between the writings of Spinoza and some of the Hattemistic pamphlets and treatises which were published during these years. Only after close scrutiny of all the evidence available will any attempt to determine the actual influence of Spinoza on these Middelburg libertines have much chance of success.

As to the direct evidence, no libertine, as one might expect, confessed openly to having derived his ideas from Spinoza. In the expositions of their ideas, there is hardly any mention of the Jewish philosopher, nor are his writings referred to in any way, unless it be to reject with indignation the suggestion that they were in fact covert Spinozists. Some of them, however, and particularly Marinus Booms, made it perfectly clear that they had at least read some of Spinoza's writings, and that in certain respects they valued his work. At a meeting of the Middelburg consistory in 1713, for example, when he was pressed to reject Spinozism openly, Booms is reported to have made the following statement:

He said he had read Spinoza fourteen years ago, in particular three chapters of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the *Ethics* and three other

¹¹ See also M. van der Bijl, *Idee en interest. Voorgeschiedenis, verloop en achtergronden van de politieke twisten in Zeeland en vooral Middelburg tussen 1702 en 1715* (Groningen, 1981).

small pieces, and that he had found him mistaken in that 1. although Spinoza denied that God had a coarse body, he called Him a spirit to which he ascribed two attributes, thought and extension; 2. Spinoza denied the resurrection of the dead; 3. in Spinoza the ceremonies of the Old Testament were not foreshadowings of the spiritual treasures of the New Testament, but instituted for political reasons. He was of the opinion that these three things alone in Spinoza were relevant to religion, and he was unable to make mention of anything else. He took much pleasure in reading the *Ethics* of Spinoza, the treatment of the passions of hate, love, wrath, sadness, fear etc., and did not consider him to be less perfect in that respect than Descartes.¹²

It is apparent from this statement that Booms was well acquainted with Spinoza's writings, although, if we are to judge from the first main point, he may not have had a full understanding of them. How was it that he came to read them?

According to Tuinman's sources, which seem to confirm Booms' own statement, Booms had been introduced to Spinoza's writings shortly before the turn of the century by a Middelburg physician living in a mill, a certain Dr. Blik. At a number of meetings at the mill, Dr. Blik, who at that time was reported to be a Spinozist himself, seems to have explained the principles of Spinozism to his pupil Booms, who, as we have seen, had by then already been accused of Hattemism, although not of Spinozism. Almost nothing is known about this Dr. Adrianus Blik, except that he was born in Delft in 1647 and matriculated at Leiden as a medical student in 1667. This was one year before another relatively unknown Spinozist, Antony van Dalen of The Hague, born in 1644, enrolled at Leiden as a student of theology.¹³ There are further indications that in these years the student population of Leiden played an important part in the spreading of libertine and Spinozistic ideas. The learned Dr. Blik seems to have functioned as an important intermediary between the academic milieu of his university and the libertine laymen of the provincial town of Middelburg.

So, during the fateful year of 1699, Booms seems to have discovered Spinoza, and to have improved his debating skills to the extent of acquiring the nick-name of "the Professor". There are indeed

¹² Tuinman, *Sibboleth*, p. 198-200.

¹³ See M.R. Wielema, "Een onbekende aanhanger van Spinoza: Antony van Dalen (1644-na 1690)", *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 4 (1993), p. 23-40.

numerous indications that Booms, thanks to his teacher, became well versed in Spinozism, and used arguments deriving from it in his discussions with his fellow townsmen and with the Reformed pastors and curates. Dr. Blik was later reported to have said that Booms was “a proud little fool” (*een hovaardig zotje*) who would be unwilling to give up his newly acquired knowledge. The Middelburg consistory noticed how easily Booms spoke when he was explaining the doctrines of Spinoza, and that he began to stutter every time he was asked to express himself in orthodox terms. As early as 1700, as we have seen, he challenged the pastor Willem Spandaw, who had just written his booklet attempting to prove that the Hattemists were actually covert Spinozists, to a debate in which he attempted to refute Spandaw’s arguments. During this debate he was supported by his friend Daniël Fannius, who subsequently entered upon a career as an anti-Orangist agitator, and who after the death of William III helped to bring about a democratic revolution in Middelburg. This Fannius, whose father, incidentally, had been acquainted with Pieter de la Court, seems to have been one of the worst libertines and atheists ever to have lived in Zeeland. He never went to church, derided public worship and belief in Christ, swore a hell of a lot, and seems to have cultivated a crude form of pantheism, maintaining that a pair of tongs, a shovel and in fact all things are God, that “things do not have a first cause, but everything has been in existence from eternity, and has merely undergone various changes”. It is probable that Fannius derived his opinions not so much from Spinoza himself, but from such Spinozistic treatises as Johannes Bredenburg’s famous *Demonstratie van ‘t eeuwig noodzakelijke Iet* (1684, 1694²), for he was explicitly accused of both recommending and distributing this pamphlet to his fellow townsmen. He and Booms being close friends, it is not surprising that Booms was asked by the Middelburg consistory to give his own views on the *Eeuwig Iet* (Eternal Something), as it was called. He declined to do this, however, which was seen as a further indication of his hidden Spinozistic sympathies.

It seems, then, that there is plenty of evidence that Spinoza was indeed read in Middelburg heterodox circles during these years. It is somewhat remarkable that a suspected libertine such as Booms should not have been afraid to admit this, even though he denied deriving his opinions from Spinoza. He often ridiculed his oppo-

nents' simple strategy of attacking him by showing that Spinoza taught the same things. Instead of proving the heterodoxy of my opinions, Booms said, they play a puerile game. The following statement, made about 1710, is taken from a passage in which he admits that he subscribes to Spinoza's definition of God, to the ontological proof of His existence, and is especially interesting:

I have not even consulted Spinoza for years. You want to tell me that I am acquainted with Spinoza: this is useless, since I admit freely that I have read parts of his works, and do not need to justify this, either to you, or anyone else. I am far beyond sailing onto Spinozistic rocks.¹⁴

While Booms was not worried about being accused of Spinozism, however, he did sometimes reject it forthrightly, as when his opponents alleged that he had derived his doctrine of the exclusiveness of God's causal activity—the entire passivity of man—from Spinoza:

I believe that God necessarily brings about everything, in accordance with the perfection of his nature. [...] Spinoza denies the cause of all things, and therefore the active being. [...] If I had a taste for grubbing around in this heap of dung I should be able to prove, in accordance with this man's assertions, that man must be considered the most active of beings.¹⁵

After having established that many Middelburg libertines were indeed acquainted with Spinoza's writings, we can ask the further question of the extent to which certain of his doctrines actually influenced those accused of Spinozism. It can be answered in two ways. One can either concentrate on similarities in vocabulary, or one can take as a starting-point the doctrinal similarities. As the opponents of Hattemism knew only too well, the one was not necessarily connected with the other. These opponents developed the hypothesis that although the Hattemists were using a perfectly orthodox Christian vocabulary, their ideas were indeed libertinistic and atheistic. According to Tuinman, for instance, the Hattemists accommodated themselves to the vulgar understanding in the way that Spinoza himself had recommended in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*. Since the people the Hattemists were addressing were Reformed Christians, they used evangelical or Biblical expressions in order to attract their attention, and kept to the standard formulas

¹⁴ Tuinman, *Sibboleth*, p. 126.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

used in the Dutch Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Tuinman's writings can in fact be considered as a determined attempt to bring this huge Hattemistic fraud to light, and to warn his flock of its "soul-corrupting" consequences.

One important result of this accommodation hypothesis was a list, compiled by Tuinman, of all the theological expressions the Hattemists were employing in order to get their Spinozistic message across. This list was supposed to be the key by means of which the true meaning of the Hattemistic writings could be revealed. It was published in 1717, and contained nearly a hundred terms.¹⁶ Unfortunately, however, many of Tuinman's so-called translations are clearly the products of his own imagination, while a number of others seem to be derived from certain well-known antinomian and spiritualistic writings of the time, such as those of Van Hattem and Jacob Bril. Only a few seem to derive from Spinozistic sources. Whether Tuinman's accommodation hypothesis is correct or not, it is indeed a fact that, if we analyse the actual terminology that Booms and his friends made use of, we find very few words with an indubitably Spinozistic origin.

Having dealt with references to Spinoza himself, and with the problem of the vocabulary of the libertines, let us finally draw some conclusions concerning the extent to which the ideas of Spinoza have indeed influenced the teachings of Booms and his followers.

1. It is clear that Spinoza's Biblical criticism contained in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was welcomed by the Middelburg Hattemists. It enabled them to develop their concept of true or internal religion. It also provided them with arguments against the supporters of Biblical literalism. Booms, for example, is quoted as saying:

I consider Scripture to descend so lowly, or to be so adapted to the minor understanding of the small, that it is a river to those lambs in which they can bathe, although it is also an ocean in which the elephant must swim; and since God accommodates Himself to our lowness and employs our means of expression to represent Himself to us in His works, He is said to have remorse and sorrow, and to have anger, and thousands more, which, however, in God denote something entirely different from us, from whom these expressions are derived. [...] God, in order to reveal His eternal will to us, has conformed to the common understanding. Scripture therefore serves to

¹⁶ In Tuinman's *Het helsche Gruwelgeheim der heillooze Vrijgeesten*.

give to the most simple man a sure and sufficient knowledge to calm his mind in the belief of the immortality of the soul; and herein Christ is for this man God's power, as for the brightest philosopher He must be God's wisdom, without which all strength is weakness and all wisdom folly.¹⁷

Booms is also reported to have said that the first three chapters of Genesis were "metaphorical". The Hattemists do not, however, seem to have derived their antinomianism from Spinoza, but rather from spiritualistic sources, as even Tuinman was aware—he pointed to David Joris and anabaptism as its source.

2. Some of the Hattemists' views on the nature of God may have been influenced by Spinoza. Booms, for example, stressed that God's actions are both free and necessary, for He acts in accordance with the perfection of His nature. God is not subject to fate. He is a free cause, and all his actions, including creation, are immanent.

All God's works happen in God, and all his effects exist in Him, not outside Him. And although God is omnipresent, He is not present as matter to matter, but as an infinite active force that sustains everything and without which nothing could exist for a moment. [...] As necessarily as the perfect Being loves His own perfection, He also wills that which reveals it, and as necessarily as He wills it, as freely does He will it. [...] The creation is the result of a free, unchanging and eternal will. Consequently, I hold that created things are necessary for God, and not contingent.¹⁸

Despite these similarities, however, Booms never employed the terms 'substance' or 'Nature' to refer to God. He also stressed the spirituality and perfection of God as opposed to the duality and imperfection of man. Many other Hattemistic philosophical notions could be discussed. In many cases, however, their origin can be found in Cartesian or occasionalist sources. The language of primary and secondary causality is not uncommon in Hattemistic treatises.

3. To sum up: the actual influence of Spinoza's philosophical works on the Hattemistic movement was probably very limited. In explaining the violent reaction against Hattemism, therefore, further factors must be taken into account. Opposition to church authority in Zeeland increased considerably at the end of the seventeenth and

¹⁷ Tuinman, *Sibboleth*, p. 113, 152-153.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131, 135, 312.

the beginning of the eighteenth century. The old dogma of 'no salvation outside the Church' came under fire from many sides. Spinoza's atheism seemed the last drop that made the cup run over and finally destroy the established hierarchies. 'Spinozism' was invented, and declared to be the hidden source of all heterodoxy. Spinoza's rich and complex philosophy was reduced to crude fatalism. The Hattemists were among the sad victims of this hoax. The example of Booms, however, testifies to the fact that Spinoza, despite everything, was still being read with impartiality, and that his works continued to be a source of knowledge for those wishing to discover their own route to salvation.¹⁹

¹⁹ The theme of this paper will, among others things, be further developed in my forthcoming books: *Spinoza and Leibniz in the Dutch Enlightenment. The debate on fatalism and optimism* and *Pesten van kerk en staat. Vervolgde vrijgeesten onder invloed van Spinoza*, in which the history of the Hattemistic movement (c. 1680-1750) will be treated as fully as possible.

IMAGES OF LIGHT AND SHADOW:
SPINOZISM BURSTS FORTH INTO DUTCH CULTURAL
LIFE (1854-1872)¹

Siebe Thissen

SPINOZISM AS AN 'EXTRA-CULTURAL' PHENOMENON

In the Netherlands, for almost two centuries, the philosophy of Spinoza was discredited by the positivists and smothered by orthodox theology. Spinozist arguments were excluded from mainstream cultural and philosophical debate. In Dutch society, the designation of *Spinozist* was used as a popular term of abuse for thinkers who had passed beyond accepted cultural boundaries. Such thinkers had often criticized the Christian foundation of western civilisation; their covert Spinozism was occasionally to be traced in philosophical novels, tracts on logic and clandestine manuscripts.² It was generally accepted that pronounced Spinozists had to be on their guard against repressive action taken by the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. The lives of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Spinozists such as the brothers Koerbagh, Anthony van Dalen, Jan Bredenburg, Pontiaan van Hattem, Willem Deurhoff, Frederik van Leenhof and Jacob Bril were dominated by insinuations, trials and even jail sentences.

Influenced by the so-called *Pantheism controversy* in Germany, Spinozism had revived during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Mendelssohn, Herder, Goethe, Hegel and other idealists brought Spinozism back to the centre of the philosophical debate, and this revival of interest even spread to Spinoza's native country. Here, the poet and freemason Johan Kinker enriched Kantian categories with Spinozist arguments, while the small Dutch Kantian

¹ I would like to thank Michael John Petry and Wim Klever for their encouragement in writing this paper.

² H.J. Siebrand, *Spinoza and the Netherlanders. An Inquiry into the Early Reception of His Philosophy of Religion* (Assen-Maastricht, 1988).

movement—led by Paulus van Hemert and Kinker—was closely interwoven with Amsterdam freemasonry. Kinker and Van Hemert considered their brotherhood to be the vanguard of Kant's policy of enlightenment.³ By introducing Spinoza's monism into his well-known poem *Het Allevan of de Wereldziel*—written in 1812—Kinker tried to bridge the gap between the Kantian subject and object.⁴ He endorsed Spinoza's adage '*Deus sive Natura*' and defined Nature as "the divine Aphrodite".

His Goethean admiration for the living and complex unity of nature made him a determined opponent of any mechanical-scientific approach to what he called the 'higher life'. Kinker rejected all scientific patterns of development and differentiation because he thought that these limited concepts would only lead us further away from 'the electric all-power', an entity which could only be located by Spinoza's intuitive science. When we take a close look at the reception of Spinozism in the Netherlands, we notice that freemasons played a large part in the diffusion of Spinozist, pantheist and naturalistic ideas. Masonic thinkers like Ignatius Aurelius Fessler and the Yorck lodge in Berlin (Fichte) influenced Kinker's intellectual development. Since theology determined the mental and cultural framework of society, 'suspicious' conceptions of God and Nature could only be expressed in extra-cultural circles—such as the masonic lodges.

In Dutch freemasonry, disguised and overt Spinozism have a long history. The first lodges were established by the followers of John Toland, whose 'Spinozism' is now being investigated anew. But since freemasonry was more liberal than established cultural life, eavesdropping and social control were commonplace. Religious 'spies' were employed to inform local or national officials about people who showed too much interest in Spinoza's works. In 1822 for instance, Johan Rudolph Thorbecke—the future leader of Dutch liberalism—became a victim of this state of affairs. During his stay in Berlin he discussed a number of topics, and Spinozism was among them. This 'bad news' reached his father, who immediately wrote

³ A.J. Hanou, *Sluiers van Isis. Johannes Kinker als voorvechter van de Verlichting, in de vrijmetselarij en andere Nederlandse genootschappen 1790-1845* (Deventer, 1988); Paulus van Hemert, *Gezag en grenzen van de menselijke rede*, ed. J. Plat & M.R. Wielema (Baarn, 1989).

⁴ J. Koopmans, "Het Allevan of de Wereldziel", *Taal & Letteren* 15 (1905), pp. 373-394.

him a letter in which he urged his son to forget about Spinoza; being associated with his ideas would definitely ruin the career he had just started. The son replied that he had to write articles to earn a living, and that Spinoza was the subject he had become interested in. He saw the point of his father's warnings, however, and added: "I know that writing about Spinoza would lock doors in my country for ever".⁵ His presentiment was right: later that year the board of the University of Leiden refused to offer him the professorial chair in philosophy because they felt uneasy about his Spinozism.⁶

This situation is typical of the first half of the nineteenth century. Spinozist opinions circulated mainly in the lodges, since philosophical debate was an accepted aspect of the ways in which their members socialized.⁷ The liberal revolution of 1848 pulled the freemasons out of their masonic shells, however, and some of them began to realize that a new era was dawning. They welcomed the social and cultural change, and started to criticize Christianity, especially its theocratic and dualist tendencies.⁸ The fifties in the Netherlands are characterized by a flood of publications in which both implicit and explicit Spinozism are clearly in evidence. One of the most important books of this period was *Images of Light and Shadow from the Interior of Java* (Licht- en Schaduwbeelden uit de binnenlanden van Java) published in 1854. Although this work does not deal with Spinozism in particular, it does offer a new kind of scientific approach that was to become typical of Dutch Spinozists. *Images of Light and Shadow* initiated the flood of Spinozist arguments into Dutch cultural life in the mid-fifties. Besides its important treatment of ecology, the book also describes the four main spiritual ideologies of the time: Christianity, deism, pantheism and materialism, as well as their exponents. In this lecture I shall concentrate on this 'forgotten' book, and show how it relates to the steady increase in Spinozist conceptions typical of the period.

⁵ From *Het Thorbecke Archief 1798-1872* (S.l., 1962), p. 207.

⁶ K.H. Boersma, *Johan Rudolph Thorbecke. Een historisch-kritische studie* (Leiden, 1949) p. 89.

⁷ Leo Apostel, *Vrijmetselarij. Een wijsgerige benadering* (Antwerpen-Baarn, 1992), p. 165-174.

⁸ Siebe Thissen, "Vrij van praal en zinnelijkheid. Vrijmetselarij en wijsbegeerte in de negentiende eeuw", *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 5 (1994), p. 193-206.

NATURE SUBSUMES ALL

In 1850, after almost ten years of arguing, insinuating, and a whole series of intellectual disappointments, a group of freemasons founded the 'clandestine' lodge Post Nubila Lux,⁹ which was not recognized by 'het Grootoosten'—the federal organisation of lodges. Its members advocated a 'School for contemplative philosophy'. The founder of the lodge, Markus Polak, was a spiritist and a philosopher, and for many years he criticized the fact that only a quarter of the one thousand Amsterdam masons visited their lodges regularly. According to Polak, drinking-bouts and debauches were more common in Amsterdam than the quest for truth and knowledge. Post Nubila Lux was a secularized lodge: the amount of ritual had been reduced, and frequent meetings in which philosophical texts were studied, became the core of its activities. Polak and the other members wanted to institute a natural religion: they believed that with the help of Spinoza this religion would replace Christianity within a few decades. They repeated the same kind of words that Kinker had been using forty years earlier. Round about the middle of the century, the identification of God with 'the divine Aphrodite' created an intellectual turmoil as interest in the natural and cultural life of the Dutch East Indies increased.¹⁰ The most sensational piece of work produced by this movement was undoubtedly *Images of Light and Shadow*. It was written by the Dutch-German scientist Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn (1809-1864), who also published many books on geology, vulcanology, topography, botany and ethnography.¹¹ From 1849 until 1855 Junghuhn was a member of Post Nubila Lux, and the masons were pleased to make use of his personal experience as a traveller. It provided them with a unique opportunity to take a close look at the essence of natural religion as it worked in practice. *Images of Light and Shadow* was discussed in groups, and the first two editions, of approximately five hundred copies each, were distrib-

⁹ M.S. Polak, *Die Loge Post Nubila Lux und die Gross-Loge der Niederlanden* (Amsterdam-Leipzig, 1854); F. Günt, *De onafhankelijke loge Post Nubila Lux te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1884).

¹⁰ On this increase of interest, see P.G.E.I.J. van der Velde, "De projectie van een Groter Nederland. P.J. Veth en de popularisering van Nederlands Indië (1848-1895)", *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 105 (1992), p. 367-382.

¹¹ About Junghuhn's works, see A.C.P. Schmidt, *Junghuhn: Biografische Beiträge* (Berlin, 1909); R. Nieuwenhuys & F. Jaquet, *Java's onuitputtelijke natuur. Reisverhalen, tekeningen en fotografieën van Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn* (Alphen aan de Rijn, 1980).

uted 'subculturally' by the lodges and their members. Who then was this Junghuhn, and why did this particular book cause so much trouble?

Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn led an adventurous and stormy life.¹² He was born in 1809 in the German village of Mansfeld, and was forced by his father, who was a surgeon, to study physics, but he soon gave this up for the study of stones and plants. While doing his national service in the army, he became involved in a duel, which resulted in a ten-year prison sentence. By pretending to be ill, he escaped and enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. In Africa, Junghuhn continued his geological and botanical research. From France he passed on to the Netherlands, signing on in the Dutch-Indian army, since he had become interested in the interiors of Java and Sumatra. He established himself on Java as a serious scientist, and during his travels through the inhospitable interior he discovered the harmony between his mortal soul and the overwhelming presence of nature. Junghuhn lost his traditional Christian belief, and said that henceforth his only church would be "that highly vaulted church, the roof of which is dotted with stars".

For Junghuhn, a travel through the jungle was more than just a journey, it was a religious and aesthetic experience. Nature made him laugh, cry and shudder. It made him forget his own identity and dissolved his Christian morals. We find not only this aesthetic surplus in his writing, but also a new scientific approach to nature, which was based upon it. It was on account of this ecstatic element in his awareness that Junghuhn produced not abstract and scientific treatises, but *literature*—comparable to that inspired by the naturalism of Thoreau, Emerson or Whitman. According to E.M. Beekman, what we have here is a naturalism built upon three frameworks, which coalesce into one consistent scientific method.¹³ First, there is the purely scientific basis—just like any other scientist the author is concerned with collecting information concerning life and nature. Secondly, he tries to focus on his personal relationship with the overwhelming power of nature: this is the aesthetic or religious aspect. Finally, he tries to interpret nature as a philosophical entity.

¹² A.W. Kroon, "Levensschets van Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn", *De Dageraad* (1864), p. 415-462; O. Noordenbos & P. Spigt, *Atheïsme en vrijdenken in Nederland* (Nijmegen, 1976), p. 161-163.

¹³ E.M. Beekman, "Junghuhn's Perception of Javanese Nature", *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 12 (1991), p. 11-20.

According to Beekman, Junghuhn's main interest lies in formulating a 'subjective manipulation' of nature. In his works, Junghuhn tries to get across the idea that many scientists are purveying a 'microscopic' kind of research: they simply focus on natural objects and construct 'views'. But nature is a whole, a consistent entity, and colours—images of light and shadow—play an important role in the perception of it. Although the sense-organ of the eye functions as an important register, however, without light the eyes are helpless. Junghuhn pleads for a 'telescopic' kind of research, in which 'distant views'—or perspectives—are given a central position. In his article Beekman describes Junghuhn's intriguing attempts to build platforms in the trees, so that he could obtain 'distant views':

So he constructed a platform in a very tall tree and in this 'airy observatory among Usnea and misty clouds' he waited for three days for the weather to clear. When it did, the sun with one swift illumination surveyed the vast scene before him and instantly 'projected' a 'map of the Batak region', in fact, one lone sunbeam suffices to disclose 'a small and alien world' he never knew existed.

Although Junghuhn focuses his eyes to describe natural phenomena, he always returns to his distant views: nature is a dynamic whole, and she requires a nomadic and sensual mind. For Junghuhn, nature is always feminine, and his descriptions of her sound like a love affair. According to Beekman, Junghuhn tries to write in a charming way because he wants to convince the reader that the omnipresence of the 'divine Aphrodite' is inescapable. Beekman:

Encoded in Junghuhn's 'scientific' and narrative texts (which together form one paradigmatic discourse) is a notion of nature that is as supreme as any religion and as concrete as the most severe prescriptive law. Nature subsumes all. She is inimitable, beyond human consideration, Spinoza's *natura naturans* [...] there is no gap between sign and referent.

In fact, Junghuhn offers us a very early form of 'deep ecology' and it is not surprising that present-day proponents of this, such as Arne Naess, make use of Spinozism as an alternative scientific method.¹⁴

This strongly anthropologically orientated book, *Images of Light and Shadow*, has as its starting point an intense conversation, on Java, between four men of science.¹⁵ The brothers Day and Night are sci-

¹⁴ See Arne Naess, *Spinoza and the Ecological Movement* (Leiden, 1992).

¹⁵ The full title of this book was: *Licht en schaduwbeelden uit de binnenlanden van*

entists—or perhaps it is more appropriate to call them ‘investigators of Nature’, who have been sent off to Java to explore the interior of the island. As they fail to find coolies, they get stuck in the little village of Gnoerag. Here, Day and Night have long conversations with the inhabitants, and try to explain to their hosts their spiritual and religious ideologies. Brother Night—the orthodox Christian—is unsuccessful in his efforts to gain support for his dualist Christian belief. Brother Day is praised by the natives: they understand his lyrical approach to nature, and his description of nature’s wholeness brings him close to the natural religion of the Javanese. A few days later, at the coast near Gnarak, they meet two colleagues: Twilight—a pantheist—and Red Morning Sky—a materialist. At night, the companions sit around the campfire and explain their ideas on nature, ethics and religion. Although the four of them expect their systems to be mutually incompatible, they agree on one conclusion: the unprejudiced study of nature is the decisive condition for any kind of progress.

Images of Light and Shadow offered the first detailed explanation of the four competing moral and religious systems in evidence in Dutch society after 1848, beyond the bounds of the esoteric extra-cultural life of the freemasons. Although the debate had been opened, however, precautions still had to be taken. The book was not distributed through the bookshops but by means of the masonic lodges, and Junghuhn’s name did not appear on the title-page. These precautions did not dampen the hostility which broke out after it had been published.¹⁶ The reviews in the journals, without exception, were angry, militant and aggressive. The periodical *De Grondwet* even noted that “never before in Dutch history has Christianity been under such a radical attack as it is now”. And, indeed, Christianity does lie at the centre of Junghuhn’s attack. The author rejects the Holy Bible and presents nature as the one and only source from

Java. Over het karakter, de mate van beschaving, de zeden en gebruiken der Javanen; over de invoering van het Christendom op Java, het bezigen der vrijen arbeid en andere vragen van den dag. Verhalen en gesprekken van de gebroeders Dag en Nacht; verzameld op reizen door gebergten en bosschen, in de woningen van armen en rijken (Amsterdam, 1854). In 1854, the author was still anonymous and the book was written by ‘The Brothers Day and Night’. In 1864, after Junghuhn’s death, his name was put on the title-page for the first time.

¹⁶ Peter Sep, “De receptie van Licht- en schaduwbeelden uit de binnenlanden van Java van F.W. Junghuhn”, *Indische Letteren* 2 (1987), p. 53-64.

which a genuine knowledge of God is to be gained. He rejects revelation, the doctrine of redemption, the divine nature of Jesus, and the intermingling of Providence in earthly affairs. He detests Christian authority and condemns its brutal attempts to convert the natives into Christian slaves. He maintains that the natives have developed their own ethics, without the aid of any Christian church or sect.

In 1854 part one of *Images of Light and Shadow* was published by Jacobus Hazenberg at Leiden, and almost immediately public opinion turned against his publishing house. Hazenberg received anonymous threats, and decided to cancel the publication of the other parts. Parts two and three were published in 1855 by Franz Güntst of Amsterdam, a militant freethinker and member of Post Nubila Lux, who also published books by Markus Polak. It is probable that it was Güntst who translated Junghuhn's work into Dutch. The German version was published in the same year at Leipzig, by Th. Thomas, a freemason who also distributed Polak's works in Germany.

The historical importance of the book does not lie simply in its forthright attack on conformist Christian values. The leading figures of *Light and Shadow*—Day, Night, Twilight and Red Morning Sky—also existed in real life, in Dutch society, and it is possible to fill in their real names. But before I introduce them, let us take a brief look at the cultural impact of this revival of Spinozism.

BERTHOLD AUERBACH'S PORTRAIT OF SPINOZA

Although for the time being Junghuhn's notorious text was generally condemned and ignored, interest in non-Christian themes had been awakened. We find a fine example of the changing climate in *De Gids*, which was, perhaps, the most important cultural magazine of the nineteenth century. This conservative-liberal monthly tried to avoid themes which might have provoked disturbances in theological circles. In 1843, for example, the Spinozist Johannes van Vloten was expelled from the editorial board for publishing a defence of the German Hegelian David Friedrich Strauss.¹⁷ By 1855, however,

¹⁷ J. van Vloten, "Het leven van Jezus", *De Gids* (1843), p. 421-433, 477-490, 549-553, 604-614. About his exclusion: C. Offringa, "Johannes van Vloten: Aufklärung en liberalisme", *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 83 (1969), p. 155-157.

things had changed. One of the editors, Petrus van Limburg Brouwer, published a thirty-four page review of an historical novel on the life of Spinoza.¹⁸ This novel—entitled *Spinoza. Ein Denkerleben*—was written by one of the most popular German writers of the time, Berthold Auerbach. Auerbach's book was a revised edition of an earlier effort, dating from 1837, which had made little impression in the Netherlands. This is evidence enough that in these eighteen years radical changes had taken place in Dutch culture. Auerbach was also widely read in the Netherlands on account of his bestseller *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (1843), and some of his books, one might mention *Op de Hoogte* (1867), appeared in Dutch translations. He showed interest in country people and natural life without having recourse to blood and soil arguments. His manner of writing accorded well with the *Biedermeierstyle* and with Spinoza's naturalism.¹⁹ He had studied at Tübingen, where Strauss introduced him to Spinoza's philosophy. In the novel he published in 1837, he presented Spinoza as the enlightened pioneer of modern Jewish thinking. Four years later his translation of Spinoza's complete works was published.²⁰ In the revised 1855 edition of his novel, he observed that he had not succeeded in freeing himself from Spinoza's 'idyllic inner life', and he confessed to an almost religious devotion to his inspirer. He presents himself as a pantheist, and Spinoza as the greatest prophet of pantheism who had ever lived. Spinoza had done away with the contrast between passion and thought, and had offered a way out of the fragmented and disorientated beliefs of contemporary theologians. According to Auerbach, Spinoza had restored the wholeness of cosmic spirituality, which was why Auerbach had devoted the central chapter of the work to Spinozistic pantheism. But the most astonishing feature of this book—for the Dutch—was the detailed description of Spinoza's character. In the Nether-

¹⁸ P.A.S. van Limburg Brouwer, "Spinoza. Het leven van een denker", *De Gids* (1855), p. 409-443.

¹⁹ On the life and work of Auerbach, E.H. Kossmann, "Lotgevallen", in: *idem, Politieke theorie en geschiedenis. Verspreide opstellen* (Amsterdam, 1987), p. 430-467 (Kossmann's grandfather was a friend of Auerbach); Gunter Helmes, "Spinoza in der schönen Literatur. Bilder aus der Zeit zwischen Vormärz und Weimarer Republik", *Studia Spinozana* 5 (1989), p. 119-147; Anne Lagny, "Spinoza: personnage de roman chez B. Auerbach et E.G. Kolbenheyer", in: *Spinoza au XXe Siècle*, ed. O. Bloch (Paris, 1993), p. 459-482.

²⁰ *Spinoza's sämtliche Werke*. Aus dem Lateinischen mit dem Leben Spinoza's von Berthold Auerbach (Stuttgart, 1841), 5 vols.

lands, the echo of Pierre Bayle could still be heard. Everyone knew that Bayle had characterized Spinoza as a denier of God's existence. Auerbach presented him as a sober, honest and ardent seeker of truth, who had sung passionately of his 'deus sive natura'.

In Brouwer's review of this book, we come across a telling cry of self pity. On account of Dutch intolerance, Spinoza had had to find a new home in Germany. The indifferent Dutch had banished their greatest thinker, and now the German idealists had to teach us the ever present importance of his ideas. Brouwer maintains that it is time to bury old prejudices. Spinoza had shown that one can live an ethical and moral life without a belief in the personal God of the Bible. Although Brouwer still declines to acknowledge that he is himself a Spinozist, in his later articles he does defend Spinoza against his detractors. After Auerbach's and Brouwer's attempts to present a new Spinoza, more and more publications on Spinoza's life and works appeared in the Netherlands.²¹ Some of them were written in a very popular style, since Spinoza was supposed not to have written for the elite, but for everyone dedicated to the art of thinking. In 1871, for instance, a family doctor from Middelburg, Samuel Coronel, wrote a popular biography of Spinoza because he had noticed that it was still the case that the seventeenth-century Spanish general Ambrosio Spinola was better known in the Netherlands than the philosopher was.²² In 1856 Auerbach's portrait was translated into Dutch by the classicist freemason Dionys Burger jr., who also wrote some interesting articles on Spinoza.²³

It was therefore the year 1855 which gave rise to the fresh flood of Spinozist arguments in Dutch cultural and spiritual life. Scientists and anthropologists such as Junghuhn made Christianity seem less self-evident, and their new Spinoza—as presented by Auerbach and Brouwer—seemed a perfect secular mirror image of Christ.

²¹ Auerbach also paid visits to Spinozists in the Netherlands, who treated him as if he were Spinoza himself. About these visits, Flanor's Vlugmaren, *De Nederlandsche Spectator* (1878), p. 294-295, 302-303.

²² S. Coronel, *Baruch D'Espinoza, in de lijst van zijn tijd* (Zaltbommel, 1871).

²³ The Auerbach translation by D. Burger jr.: *Spinoza. Het leven van een denker* (Amsterdam, 1856, 2nd ed. 1863). His own ideas on Spinoza were published in *Homerus, Plato, Spinoza* (Zutphen, 1860); "De metafysica van Spinoza", *De Nieuwe Recensent* (1861); "Spinoza en de onsterfelijkheid", *De Nieuwe Recensent* (1861); "De zedenkunde van Spinoza", *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* (1862).

NIGHT: CHRISTOCRATIC ANTI-SPINOZISM AND CHRISTIAN SPINOZISM

Let us return to the *Images of Light and Shadow*. Brother Night is presented as a deeply religious Christian, clinging desperately to his beliefs, rejecting the primitive natural religion of the natives of Java. In Dutch cultural life we find the same kind of rejection, but here Spinozism and naturalism are the objects of scorn. Petrus Hofstede de Groot for instance, the spokesman of the Groninger school of theology, pointed out that the popularity of atheism in the Netherlands had increased since the thirties.²⁴ In the mid-fifties he accused Spinozists of introducing the concept of 'self deceit' into spiritual life. Rationalist Spinozism led to people communicating only with themselves, and therefore contributed to the loss of a community of spirit within society. According to Hofstede de Groot, Spinozism constituted a direct route to a dangerous society made up of 'discouraging beasts of prey'.²⁵ He argued that there can only be one final conclusion, Spinozism is nothing more nor less than "a dangerous vortex, swallowing up both the ships and their crews".²⁶

In 1862 a Christian response to the revival of Spinozism appeared in a book written by an intellectually unstable but remarkable Dutch theologian, by the name of Antonius van der Linde. His Göttingen thesis *Spinoza. Seine Lehre und deren erste Nachwirkungen in Holland* merely provoked indignation among Dutch Spinozists. Van der Linde defined himself as a "Christocrat", and started a crusade against anything which seemed to him to be modernist. Although only a hundred copies of his book were printed, both devastating and adulatory reviews appeared in the journals. Van der Linde attempted to update the traditional but negative image of Spinoza as a disturber of peace and piety. He tried to convince his readers that Spinoza was a sadist, who spent his life torturing and killing insects and justified this dark habit by calling it research. Spinoza's life was not one of integrity, but of weakness and cowardice. Van der Linde maintained that it was on account of his cowardice that his main

²⁴ P. Hofstede de Groot, *Theologica Naturalis* (Groningen, 1834).

²⁵ Quotation from J.B.F. Heersprink, *De Godgeleerdheid en hare beoefenaars aan de Hoogeschool te Groningen* (Groningen, 1864), 2 vols.

²⁶ P. Hofstede de Groot wrote about Spinoza in this period: "Jezus Christus volgens Spinoza", *Waarheid in Liefde* (1862), p. 789-802; "De waarde van Spinoza's wijsbegeerte", *Waarheid in Liefde* (1862), p. 803-842.

books had been published posthumously. He considered the *Ethics* to be 'pie in the sky', and blamed Strauss and the Tübingers for demythologizing Christianity. He accused the Spinozists of creating a new myth around Spinoza. It is hardly surprising that Hofstede de Groot should have been delighted with the book. He agreed with Van der Linde that it was impossible to reconcile Christianity with Spinozism.²⁷

Not all theologians agreed with them. Those of the Leiden school claimed the opposite, and proposed a marriage between Spinozism and Christianity. Wessel Scheffer, for example, noted that Spinoza's works had an important bearing upon contemporary problems concerning our existence, but did not agree with the way in which the naturalists were identifying God with nature.²⁸ According to him, although the *Ethics* treats nature as an autonomous exterior—or 'natura naturans'—many naturalists regard it only as a nexus of modifications—or 'natura naturata'. He regards it as impossible to reconcile Spinozism with modern science, since Spinoza had no conception of procedures such as induction and analogy, which are now necessary to empirical research. Like Kinker and Junghuhn, Scheffer points out that Spinoza was interested not in "particular appearances" but only in "mutual connections". The core of Spinozism is the "imagination" and not the "intellect". Nevertheless, we need Spinoza as an ally in "these less ecclesiastical times" for he is "the Prometheus of religious enthusiasm".

The Leiden theologian Johannes Hendrik Scholten was even more explicit than Scheffer in attempting to reconcile Spinozism with Calvinism.²⁹ Christianity should not reject Spinozism, its object should be reconciliation with it. Spinoza's strict determinism was in fact one with that of Calvinism. Scholten maintains that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination is to be found in Spinoza's axiomatic assertion that all beings are modifications of the One Supreme Being or Substance. God is the sovereign principle, free will is an illusion. In 1881—on the occasion of his forty-year jubilee as professor at

²⁷ Hofstede de Groot, *De waarde van Spinoza's wijsbegeerte*.

²⁸ W. Scheffer, "Spinoza in een nieuwe gedaante", *Godgeleerde Bijdragen* (1863), p. 194-227.

²⁹ G. Brillenburg, *J.H. Scholten als modern theoloog* (Amsterdam 1927); H.G. Hubbeling, "Synthetisch Modernisme: J.H. Scholten als theoloog", *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* (1961), p. 107-142; H.G. Hubbeling, "Calvinistisch spinozisme", *Bzzletin* 121 (1984).

Leiden–Scholten was offered a bust of Spinoza. Spinozism was no longer an alien element in Dutch spiritual life.

TWILIGHT: CRITICISM OF SCIENCE

Let us now turn to Twilight, the pantheist and third participant in *Images of Light and Shadow*. By 1855 certain dissident members of Post Nubila Lux had become convinced that naturalism and Spinozism should no longer be confined to the extra-cultural circles of freemasonry. It was this conviction that led them to form a public association of freethinkers, which they called The Dawn (*De Dageraad*). This new generation of overt freethinkers accepted pantheism as one of their basic spiritual principles. Their most prominent philosopher, Alexander Francois Sifflé of Middelburg, exerted himself in introducing Spinoza to the Dutch public.³⁰ In a lecture given to the Zeeland Society of Sciences (*Zeeuws Genootschap der Wetenschappen*) in 1859, he made the point that a real ‘Dutch philosophy’ had now taken shape.³¹ According to Sifflé, the present was big with pan(en)theism, and he designated Spinoza as the founder and primary exponent of this momentous tradition. He praised Kinker for the revitalisation of it, and thanked him for his efforts in spreading pantheism and Spinozism throughout Dutch society.

Sifflé used Spinozism in order to criticize the current enthusiasm for empiricism and natural science. He maintained that Auguste Comte’s advocacy of empiricism was nothing more than a reaction against competing idealist and religious systems. He saw empiricism as an ‘emergency exit’, a ‘new dogmatism’, set in opposition to the ‘old’ metaphysical dogmas. Modern thinkers had confined philosophy to arid intellectualism, so that it was no longer “the voice of the mind”. Present-day scientists were trying to gain knowledge of nature, but they were not able to fathom the essence and the wholeness of it. Sifflé pointed out that since empiricism destroys the perspective provided by the omnipotence of Substance, it is at odds with both philosophy and Spinozism—that is, the foundations of any

³⁰ Siebe Thissen, “A.F. Sifflé 1801-1872: een Middelburgse Robespierre of een negentiende-eeuwse Spinoza?” *Zeeuws Tijdschrift* 6 (1994), p. 206-219.

³¹ A.F. Sifflé, “Verhandeling over B. de Spinoza”, *De Dageraad* (1859), p. 97-116.

true metaphysics. Not empiricism but "intuitive science" should be the primary principle of natural science.³²

In spite of his metaphysical preoccupation, Siffle was not trying to follow Scheffer and Scholten and connect Spinozism with Christian metaphysics. Spinozism and Christianity are incompatible, and Siffle showed that there could be no justification for attempting to chain Spinoza to any church or theology. With his death in 1872, this critical approach to empiricism and natural science lost direction. The pantheist summer turned out to be a short one. Schopenhauer defined this 'fashionable' pantheism as a 'decent man's atheism'. The new generation of Spinozists was 'less decent', however, and went on to embrace overt atheism as well as scientific materialism.

RED MORNING SKY: A MODERN SCIENTIST

The last character in *Images of Light and Shadow* is Red Morning Sky, the exponent of scientific materialism. He is a sceptic who only accepts facts that can be weighed or measured by empirical research. He is not interested in God or metaphysics and considers the existence of God to be nothing but a primitive fable. In 1855 these 'factualists' and 'hedonists' had a bad reputation in the Netherlands.³³ Deists and pantheists often described themselves as true believers, but materialists detested all beliefs and religions: only facts, laws and knowledge could bring progress to mankind.

In the Netherlands, the most explicit representative of this materialism was the biochemist and philosopher Jacob Moleschott.³⁴ Moleschott had been trained in the famous school of physics established by Mulder and Donders in Utrecht. In 1850 he opened the *Materialism controversy* in Germany with his notorious book on dietetics. He was also one of the founders of the World Union of Free-

³² A.F. Siffle, "In welken zin bestaat er een bovennatuurkunde?" *De Dageraad* (1862), p. 49-51, and "Hoe begreep Spinoza de eeuwigheid der ziel?" *De Dageraad* (1869), p. 529-539.

³³ See J.G. ten Bokkel, "De Kringloop des levens", *De Dageraad* (1892), p. 520-559.

³⁴ Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht-Boston, 1977), p. 80-99; Siebe Thissen, "Het Hooge Lied van het Materialisme. Jacob Moleschott's metafysica", in: *Jacob Moleschott: monist of materialist*, ed. Michiel Wielema *et al.* (Rotterdam, 1993), p. 26-34.

thinkers (WUF), and in his circle of friends we find an international vanguard which included George Henry Lewes, George Eliot, Ludwig Feuerbach, David Friedrich Strauss, Cesaro Lombroso and Elisee Reclus. Of great importance was his close friendship with Berthold Auerbach. It was in his home that Moleschott met his later wife, and was initiated into Spinoza's philosophy. Auerbach and Moleschott considered Spinoza to be an honest seeker of truth whose life had been dedicated to science and research. Moleschott has recently been interpreted as "a nineteenth century Spinoza".³⁵ He was always searching diligently for the fundamental laws of—as he called it—"the circular cause" or "wholeness" of nature. His denial of all metaphysics and his reduction of Spinozism to physics isolated him from other scientists in his home country. Disappointed, he left the Netherlands and took up posts in Germany, Switzerland and Italy. In Italy he finally found a new home and even became a senator.

In 1862 a second important book on Spinoza's life and works appeared, *Baruch d'Espinoza. Zijn leven en werken in verband met zijn en onzen tijd*, dedicated to Jacob Moleschott, the new-age Spinozan scientist. The author was Johannes van Vloten,³⁶ who had written it in order to attack those Christian and pantheistic Spinozists who were attempting to link Spinozism with metaphysics. According to Van Vloten, Spinoza in his *Ethics* had put a definitive end to all metaphysics. His book on Spinoza was meant for the new generation of *human beings* who had broken the chains binding them to churches and metaphysical systems, and were preparing themselves for "a Heaven on Earth". Earlier, in 1855, he had praised modern science as the most important instrument of progress and happiness.³⁷ People were no longer "Christians", dependent on irrational dogmas, but "human beings", able to create their own history on the foundation of Spinoza's *Ethics*. In England, George Henry Lewes held similar views, and in Germany Kuno Fischer proposed similar

³⁵ According to the philosopher V. Peeters in his edition of Jacob Moleschott, *De eenheid des levens* (Baarn, 1989).

³⁶ Mea Mees Verwey, *De betekenis van Johannes van Vloten* (Santpoort, 1928). This book contains a bibliography of Van Vloten's works, including almost sixty publications on Spinoza and Spinozism written between 1855 and 1882.

³⁷ J. van Vloten, "Godsdienst en Natuurkennis", in: *idem, IJselkout. Mengelingen en bijdragen* (Deventer, 1855), p. 174-192. In this compilation we find two more essays on Spinoza: "Spinoza en Leibnitz", "Spinoza en Shakespeare".

arguments. Van Vloten was, therefore, expressing an international conviction. I do not think, however, that we should regard him as an orthodox materialist. He agrees with Fischer that “thinking” and “perception” are not merely transformations of matter, but objects of “animated matter”. He concludes from this that present-day Spinozists have the important task of refuting “the mechanist image of Spinoza, making Spinozism adaptable in terms of modern science”. He maintains that Spinozists should try to translate the mathematical approach to the passions into a practical philosophy of life. In this new age, dominated as it is by science and scientific laws, the *Ethics* should be used as a guide, a compass. Van Vloten places Spinozism at the centre of not only the ‘old’ metaphysics, but also the ‘new’ empiricism. Spinozism reconciles knowledge–‘natura naturata’–and contemplation–‘natura naturans’. According to his biographer, Van Vloten was striving towards a ‘purified Spinozism’. Spinozism was to become an ideology, and Van Vloten was to free it of all the elements no longer of any use in a scientific age. ‘Useless’ aspects, such as the survival of the mind after death, were deleted in order to make it relevant to modern insights. Van Vloten was undoubtedly the most active Spinozist of the nineteenth century. He also contributed to the international debate: in 1862 he found a copy of the lost *Korte Verhandeling*.³⁸

SOME PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

Although the differences between deism, pantheism, Calvinist Spinozism and materialism seem obvious enough, in practice Dutch Spinozism fell into two main movements. Just as German philosophical life was dominated by Hegelians of the left and right, so in the Netherlands intellectual life was dominated by a debate between Spinozists of the left and right. Van Limburg Brouwer—who since the early sixties had been a firm believer in Spinoza—cherished Junghuhn’s inheritance. In a series of articles on ‘atheist tendencies’ in Buddhist and Hindu culture, like the Niricvara Sankhya, which he wrote for *De Gids*, he tried to demonstrate that natural religions have much in common with Spinozism. He thought it possible that

³⁸ Siebe Thissen, “Kom gauw naor ’t Nut, Van Vloten gieet debatteeren”, *Trouw (Letter & Geest)* 9 januari 1993.

Spinoza had used elements taken from the Sankhya religion in order to express his own monist convictions.³⁹ He denied that atheism had anything to do with Spinozism, pointing out that the denial of a personal God is as old as mankind. There is nothing new about Spinozism. It has nothing to do with development. It is simply a 'repetition' of natural experiences. In his article on Eastern atheism, he urges his readers not only to read Spinoza, but also to study the natural cultures of India and the Dutch East Indies:

We in the West have to learn about mutual tolerance. Truly religious believers have to get used to atheists, who usually live as ethically as Christian people. When our tolerance turns into practice, we discover our humanity, and then the question of whether a person is a Jew, Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Brahman or Buddhist no longer has any meaning.

In 1872 Brouwer published his most important work on Spinozism. As in the case of Junghuhn—this was not a scientific book but a novel called *Akbar*. It pictures the spiritual life in medieval India during the reign of the emperor Akbar. As in Junghuhn's case, we are confronted with a 'subjective manipulation' of nature. This naturalistic novel was enormously popular in the Netherlands, and between 1900 and 1940 over fifty thousand copies of it were sold. It is, therefore, certainly the case that the increase in knowledge concerning the anthropology of natural cultures stimulated the rise of Spinozism in Dutch intellectual circles. Colonialism unintentionally provided arguments which could be used in order to criticize the intellectual climate at home. In 1862 Siffle showed that right-wing Spinozism of the Scholten kind was closely related to the 'Brahman Yoga doctrine', and that left-wing Spinozism of the Van Vloten kind was akin to the 'Sankhya doctrine'.⁴⁰ Brouwer and Siffle were quite clearly trying to define their Spinozism completely independently of Christian notions, definitions and conceptions. Dutch Spinozists thought of themselves as 'Yogi' or 'Sankhyi'.

By 1885 the climate had changed dramatically. The seventh edition of Junghuhn's *Images of Light and Shadow* received excellent and positive reviews in the major Dutch journals. The criticism which

³⁹ P.A.S. van Limburg Brouwer, "Oosters Atheïsme", *De Gids* (1862), p. 425-447. Also interesting is his article on Spinoza and the Kabbala: "De Kabbala", *De Gids* (1870), p. 1-30.

⁴⁰ On this classification, see A. van der Linde, *Verspreide Opstellen* (Utrecht, 1866), p. 445-446.

Junghuhn and the Spinozists had levelled at Christianity was no longer regarded as a threat to western civilisation.⁴¹ One of the reviews was even entitled “*Good Wine Needs No Bush*”. Flanor, the columnist of the popular radical journal *De Nederlandsche Spectator*—himself an admirer of Spinoza—observed that “wisdom always derives from the East and reaches maturity in the West”. Knowledge of natural life was being used to legitimize controversial systems of thought such as Spinozism. Spinoza’s admiration for the living complexity of nature and Moleschott’s notion of the ‘circular cause of life’ were attracting a whole range of scientists and thinkers. In 1855, their ‘deep ecological’ attempts to evoke the wildness of tropical islands or the omnipotence of Substance, had scared many people off. According to Beekman, the notion of Nature prevalent in Dutch society, was nothing more than a decorative literary cliché. For this first generation of overt Spinozists, however, this discovery of nature constituted an enormous impulse to push on into the development of post-masonic ideas. They brought Spinozism back into philosophical debate, and gave expression to an alternative manner of thinking which was to dominate cultural life in the Netherlands until 1940.⁴² Nature was no longer a decorative cliché, but a source of profound esthetic and religious experience.

⁴¹ Sep, “De receptie van Licht en Schaduweelden”, p. 63-64.

⁴² On the role of Spinozism in Dutch philosophical life (1855-1940), see Siebe Thissen, “Een wijsgerige beweging en haar cultuurtaak”, *Wijsgerig Perspectief* 5 (1994), p. 167-171.

2. GERMANY

LEIBNIZ ET SPINOZA

Jacqueline Lagrée

“La nature est une et toujours la même”¹

“Tout est lié dans la nature”²

Entre Leibniz et Spinoza règne, semble-t-il d'emblée, une opposition franche: chez l'un le monisme de la substance, l'immanence et l'univocité de l'être, chez l'autre la pluralité infinie des substances, la transcendance divine et l'analogie. Comme le remarquait Yvon Belaval, “il n'y a pas incommunicabilité de deux mondes—ce qui couperait court à tout échange philosophique—mais incompatibilité”;³ ce qui n'empêche pas, soulignait-il aussi, sur certaines questions des connivences d'autant plus remarquables qu'elles ne sont pas immédiates.

Spinoza n'a pas connu la philosophie de Leibniz quoique les deux hommes se soient rencontrés à Amsterdam en novembre 1676; une relation courtoise, comme il en existe entre doctes, s'établit entre eux mais elle s'accompagne d'emblée d'une méfiance voire d'une opposition affirmée entre les deux pensées. Leibniz apprécie Spinoza; il admire sa puissance de penser mais il récuse les conséquences de son système et critique sévèrement ses capacités mathématiques; s'il a eu “plusieurs pensées excellentes parmi un grand nombre d'assertions peu recevables et très fausses” Leibniz indique aussi des raisonnements⁴ où “il est allé trop vite faute d'observer la rigueur des démonstrations”.⁵ Spinoza, quant à lui, se méfie de

¹ Spinoza, *Ethique* III, Préface, dans: *Opera*, éd. C. Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1972), 4 vols., II, p. 138.

² Leibniz, *Théodicée* § 119, dans: *Die philosophischen Schriften*, éd. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875-1890; Hildesheim, 1978), 7 vols., VI.

³ Yvon Belaval, “Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza”, *Archives de Philosophie* 46 (1993), p. 531-552, 538.

⁴ Notamment dans les annotations sur l'*Ethique*. Voir la traduction de ce texte par V. Carraud dans la revue *Philosophie* 2 (1984), p. 3-19.

⁵ “Annotations aux lettres de Sténon”, dans: Leibniz, *Textes inédits d'après les manuscrits de la bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre* (Paris, 1948), p. 159.

Leibniz: "autant que je puis le conjecturer par ses lettres, il m'a paru être un homme d'un esprit libéral et versé dans toutes les sciences. Je croirais inconsideré cependant de lui communiquer si vite mes écrits".⁶

Si l'on a pu, avec un brin de provocation, "considérer la philosophie de Leibniz comme une transformation particulière du spinozisme",⁷ il est à coup sûr légitime de lire la *Théodicée* comme une réponse au *Traité Théologico-Politique* de Spinoza, de façon plus occulte mais non moins ferme qu'aux écrits de Bayle. Leibniz connaît bien l'environnement intellectuel de Spinoza. Il a lu *La philosophie interprète de l'Écriture Sainte* de Louis Meyer dès 1667⁸ et connaît son auteur; il lit le *TTP* dès 1670;⁹ il en fait des extraits et le discute en commentant les lettres à Oldenburg.¹⁰ L'opposition entre les deux philosophies de la religion paraît d'emblée franche et sans faille, notamment sur la séparation, affirmée par l'un, récusée par l'autre, entre philosophie et théologie:

La théologie n'a rien à demander ni rien à craindre de la philosophie à en croire l'auteur. Il a tort. La philosophie et la théologie sont deux vérités qui s'accordent entre elles. Le vrai ne peut être ennemi du vrai et si la théologie contredisait la vraie philosophie, elle serait fausse.¹¹

Leibniz a-t-il réfuté Spinoza? L'a-t-il mal compris? Son hostilité immédiate au *TTP* est-elle la marque d'un philosophe soucieux de promouvoir la piété sous sa forme traditionnelle? Ne faut-il pas lire plutôt, derrière l'opposition frontale des deux systèmes, deux perspectives aussi différentes que celles de deux monades qui pourtant exprimeraient à bien des égards le même monde et donc aussi s'entr'exprimeraient l'une l'autre? Pour être irréductibles et incompatibles, les deux modèles de rationalité qui commandent les deux philosophies, la rationalité homogène du monde spinoziste et la sur-rationalité qui règle la pensée théologique chez Leibniz ne se rejoi-

⁶ Lettre 72 à Schuller du 18 nov. 1675: éd. Gebhardt IV, p. 305.

⁷ Gilbert Boss, "Spinoza et Leibniz: l'histoire", dans: *idem, Esquisses de dialogues philosophiques* (Zurich, 1994), p. 234.

⁸ Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, p. 71 et *Essais de Théodicée* § 119, éd. Gerhardt VI.

⁹ Lettre à Thomasius du 23 sep. 1670, Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Zweiter Reihe, Erster Band: *Philosophischer Briefwechsel* (Berlin, 1987), p. 66. Dans sa lettre à Leibniz du 9 nov. 1671, Spinoza propose à Leibniz de lui envoyer le *TTP* au cas où il ne le posséderait pas encore: Lettre 46, éd. Gebhardt IV, p. 234.

¹⁰ *Die philosophischen Schriften*, éd. Gerhardt I, p. 123-130.

¹¹ "Réfutation inédite de Spinoza", dans: A. Foucher de Careil, *Leibniz, Descartes et Spinoza* (Paris, 1862), p. 219.

gnent-elles pas asymptotiquement? Entre Leibniz et Spinoza on peut aisément construire des chiasmes: c'est le philosophe moniste qui pratique l'art de la coupure et de la démarcation, entre foi et philosophie, entre imagination et raison; c'est le philosophe de la multiplicité des substances qui valorise la distinction par degrés et recherche la continuité. Chez l'un et l'autre, cependant, le même refus du vide, du vide spatial comme du vide des formes, et pour la même raison, qui est métaphysique et théologique et qui renvoie à l'infinie productivité de l'être, qu'il s'agisse du seul être par soi qu'est Dieu chez Spinoza ou de l'infinité des effets de la substance et de sa productivité infinie quoiqu'unifiée dans sa notion complète, chez Leibniz. Les oppositions franches que nous soulignerons d'abord, ne doivent pas occulter l'horizon de productivité et de vie où se rejoignent asymptotiquement une philosophie de la substance comme puissance d'agir et une philosophie *des* substances comme autant de forces qui agissent toujours quoiqu'elles pâissent souvent. Leibniz qualifiait le spinozisme de "cartésianisme outré";¹² à bien des égards, le leibnizianisme peut apparaître, pour reprendre un mot de Michel Fichant, comme un "spinozisme retenu".

LE GENRE DES LIVRES

Un premier rapprochement s'impose entre le *Traité Théologico-Politique* et la *Théodicée* si l'on considère le genre des livres: ce ne sont pas des traités philosophiques conduits en forme selon la rigueur des enchaînements démonstratifs mais des traités (pas des manuels ou des lettres) qui associent divers procédés argumentatifs et persuasifs: la démonstration en forme et l'enchaînement de syllogismes,¹³ la réfutation de textes d'auteurs déterminés,¹⁴ des explications de textes ou des exégèses de lieux bibliques.¹⁵ Arrêtons-nous d'abord sur les *titres*:

– *théologico-politique* est un hapax qui n'apparaît que dans ce titre dans toute l'œuvre de Spinoza. Le syntagme "théologico-politique"

¹² *Théodicée* § 393.

¹³ Par ex. *TTP* IV sur la perfection humaine, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 59-60; *Théodicée* § 7, démonstration de l'existence de Dieu comme première raison des choses.

¹⁴ Maïmonide, Alpakhar, Bayle, etc.

¹⁵ Leibniz commente abondamment les textes de Bayle mais refuse de se livrer aux exégèses scripturaires qui ne sont pas de sa compétence pour leur préférer les argumentations purement logiques. Cf. la déclaration de principe en *Discours préliminaire* § 21, éd. Gerhardt VI, p. 63.

est bien présent au XVII^e siècle dans un certain nombre d'ouvrages calvinistes, mais c'est pour justifier la dépendance du politique à l'égard du théologique;¹⁶ le tiret évoque ici le contraire du contenu du livre dont l'enjeu est non de lier mais de séparer, de libérer, le politique de la contrainte ou du contrôle du théologique. Leibniz ne s'y trompe pas qui désigne le livre non pas sous son titre mais par son sous-titre *de libertate philosophandi*.

– *théodicée* est un néologisme¹⁷ qui évoque le procès de Dieu et la plaidoirie de l'avocat plaidant la cause de Dieu; c'est selon Leibniz "une science ou une doctrine de la justice de Dieu (tout ensemble de sa sagesse et de sa bonté)."¹⁸ L'idée, elle, vient des stoïciens et notamment de Sénèque.

Les deux ouvrages s'adressent plus ou moins au même type de *destinataires*: des lecteurs cultivés, déjà frottés de philosophie sans être véritablement des doctes. La différence de langue n'est pas vraiment significative. Spinoza écrit en latin pour restreindre le cercle des lecteurs et refuse que son livre soit traduit en néerlandais;¹⁹ Leibniz choisit d'écrire dans une langue vernaculaire étrangère, langue de cour, le français "parce que cette matière y a été traitée depuis peu par d'autres et y est lue davantage par ceux à qui on voudrait être utile par ce petit travail."²⁰

L'*enjeu* diffère assurément: il est politique dans un cas: assurer la liberté de penser et de discuter sans nuire à la paix de l'État, moral dans l'autre: sauver la philosophie morale contre le risque mortel du nécessitarisme; mais dans les deux cas, il implique une prise de position sur les rapports entre philosophie et théologie, séparation stricte ou articulation hiérarchisée. Au delà de ces enjeux explicites, les deux traités constituent aussi une *entrée dans le système* par une voie plus facile, plus populaire, que le traité en forme démonstrative

¹⁶ Cf. J. Lagrée, "Leo Strauss lecteur de Spinoza", *La pensée de Leo Strauss, Cahiers de philosophie politique et juridique* 23 PU Caen (1993), p. 115-135.

¹⁷ Le mot apparaît pour la première fois en 1696 dans une lettre.

¹⁸ A des Bosses, 5 fév. 1712: éd. Gerhardt II, p. 437. Voir aussi la lettre à Jablonski du 23 I. 1700: "Je m'étais promis d'écrire un jour une théodicée et d'y venger la bonté, la sagesse et la justice de Dieu aussi bien que sa toute puissance et son inévitable influence: éd. Gerhardt VI, p. 3, note.

¹⁹ Lettre 44 à J. Jelles: "Ce n'est pas moi seulement qui le demande, beaucoup de mes amis et connaissances se joignent à moi: ils verraient avec peine que ce livre fût interdit, ce qui arriverait sans aucun doute s'il était publié en hollandais". Spinoza, *Oeuvres*, éd. Ch. Appuhn (Paris, 1964-1966), 4 vols., IV, p. 276.

²⁰ *Théodicée*, Préface, p. 48.

rigoureuse qui a pour effet de durcir quelque peu les thèses. Leur comparaison est donc particulièrement intéressante pour faire dialoguer les deux philosophies.

OPPOSITIONS FRONTALES

L'opposition frontale de ces deux discours sur Dieu et sur le rapport de l'homme à Dieu, tient à une opposition métaphysique radicale: celle qui oppose le monisme de la substance à la pluralité infinie des monades.²¹ Avec leurs conséquences philosophiques et théologiques: un Dieu non personnel immanent au monde, le statut modal de l'homme, un nécessitarisme strict, l'identification du possible et du réel d'une part, la multiplicité infinie et graduée des substances, un Dieu personnel et transcendant, la distinction en Dieu du possible et du réel et subséquemment du certain et déterminé d'avec le nécessaire d'autre part. L'opposition religieuse fondamentale entre Spinoza et Leibniz tient à leur conception de la relation, intellectuelle *versus* interpersonnelle, entre l'homme et Dieu, opposition qui elle-même repose sur une divergence de statut entre puissance, sagesse et bonté en Dieu. C'est donc de cette analyse que nous partons.

PUISSANCE / SAGESSE / BONTÉ

Il est traditionnel de distinguer les philosophies religieuses selon la hiérarchie qu'elles établissent entre les trois "primordialités"²² que sont la puissance, la sagesse et la bonté. De ce point de vue, il est clair que chez Spinoza, la puissance commande et même écrase la sagesse et la bonté tandis que, chez Leibniz, du moins après 1670, la sagesse éclaire la bonté qui commande la puissance. Cette inversion des rapports correspond très exactement au refus d'une part, à la réhabilitation d'autre part, du principe de finalité (ou principe du meilleur) comme principe architectonique.

²¹ Cf. le célèbre "Spinoza aurait raison s'il n'y avait pas de monades", éd. Gerhardt III, p. 575.

²² Pour reprendre l'expression de Leibniz qui, comme Augustin, les fait correspondre aux trois personnes de la Trinité: cf. *Systema theologicum* § 13 (Paris, 1844; traduit par A. de Broglie: Paris, 1846) et *Théodicée* § 50.

1. Pour Spinoza, seule la *puissance* peut être proprement affirmée de Dieu et cette puissance, le *TTP* le redit à plusieurs reprises en reprenant une formulation de Pline,²³ est identique à la puissance de la nature,²⁴ la relation jouant dans les deux sens: la puissance de la nature en général n'est pas autre chose que la puissance de Dieu; la puissance d'un être est identique à son essence ou à sa nature;²⁵ la puissance de Dieu, cause de toutes choses, est entièrement exprimée dans l'ensemble des choses qui existent et qui suivent nécessairement de la nature divine.²⁶ La puissance de Dieu ne déborde donc pas la productivité divine effective, infinie, prise en sa totalité.

Spinoza parle peu de la sagesse divine: l'expression est le plus souvent rapportée au Christ,²⁷ ou à un moindre degré à Salomon.²⁸ L'entendement est toujours un mode et donc appartient à la nature naturée: l'entendement divin est le mode infini immédiat de l'attribut pensée; l'entendement humain est un mode fini; les deux modes ne diffèrent que comme le tout et la partie,²⁹ celle-ci comportant, en raison de sa finitude, des idées inadéquates.

La volonté est elle aussi, un mode du penser et n'appartient pas plus à Dieu que les autres choses naturelles. Il n'y a pas, sinon métonymiquement, en Dieu comme en l'homme, de volonté distincte des volitions; la volonté n'est qu'un être de raison. Dieu n'a pas de volonté;³⁰ il est une cause immanente, infiniment productive qui, éternellement, nécessairement, sans failles, produit une infinité

²³ "...naturae potentia idque esse quod deum vocemus". Pline, *Historia naturalium* II, § 27.

²⁴ *TTP* I, III, XVI, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 28, 46, 189.

²⁵ *Ethique* IV, déf. IV.

²⁶ *Ethique* I, propositions 16 et 33-36.

²⁷ "Sapientiam Dei hoc est sapientiam quae supra humanam est, naturam humanam in Christo assumpsisse": *TTP*, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 21; "filius Dei hoc est Dei aeterna sapientia": lettre 73, *ibid.* IV, p. 307; "Dei sapientia per Jesum Christum maxime manifesta fuit", *ibid.*

²⁸ *TTP* II et III.

²⁹ Cf. *Ethique* II, prop. 40.

³⁰ "Ni l'entendement ni la volonté n'appartiennent à la nature de Dieu". *Ethique* I, prop. 17, schol. Dans ce scolie Spinoza ajoute que si l'on devait attribuer à Dieu entendement et volonté ceux-ci ne conviendraient avec le nôtre que de nom; en réalité, entendement, volonté et puissance en Dieu ne sont qu'une seule et même chose. Leibniz fait comme s'il n'y avait pas de conditionnel, donc comme si Spinoza reprenait à son compte cette hypothèse d'un entendement et d'une volonté attribués à Dieu, et dénonce une contradiction entre ce scolie et *Ethique* I, prop. 3 qui dit que la cause (ici l'entendement divin) et l'effet (entendement humain) ont quelque chose de commun. Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, p. 279 et 283 de la traduction de R. Bouveresse dans *Spinoza et Leibniz, l'idée d'animisme universel* (Paris, 1992).

de choses en une infinité de modes.³¹ L'être qui existe par soi est réalité absolue et pure puissance puisqu'il n'est pas de force extérieure qui puisse s'y opposer.³² Pour Spinoza donc, la toute puissance est première et elle englobe sagesse et bonté; la puissance n'est pas réglée sur la sagesse (ce qui serait une conception anthropomorphique) ni sur la volonté arbitraire (ce qui ferait de Dieu un tyran); l'abandon de la notion de création permet d'éviter toutes ces difficultés puisque la production infinie des modes est en même temps la vie infinie de l'Être dont un des infinis attributs est la pensée.

2. Aussi bien dans ses notes sur Wachter³³ que dans ses annotations à l'*Ethique*, Leibniz critique l'identification de la puissance divine avec la *potentia naturae*, celle du *jus Dei* avec la *potentia Dei*,³⁴ l'assimilation de la *potentia* à la *vis existendi*,³⁵ la détermination de la volonté comme mode, la réduction du bon et du mauvais à un point de vue relatif, le rejet du finalisme et de la prise en compte de la *ratio boni*. Tout au long de la *Théodicée*, Leibniz accuse Spinoza, en compagnie d'Abélard, Wyclif et Hobbes, de confondre puissance et volonté.³⁶ Entendement divin et humain ne sont point identiques mais seulement analogues. "Si tout se produit nécessairement à partir de la nature divine, tous les possibles existent et la philosophie morale est supprimée."³⁷

3. La perspective de Leibniz, du moins après 1670, est tout autre:

Je serais plutôt pour ceux qui reconnaissent en Dieu comme en tout autre esprit trois primordialités: force, connaissance et volonté; car toute action d'un esprit demande: *posse, scire, velle*. L'essence primitive de toute substance consiste dans la force; c'est cette force en Dieu qui fait que Dieu est nécessairement et que tout ce qui est doit en émaner. Ensuite vient la lumière ou sagesse qui comprend toutes les idées pos-

³¹ *Ethique* I, prop. 16.

³² Cf. *Ethique* I, prop. 11, dem. et schol.

³³ *Textes inédits*, p. 667-680, traduits par Foucher de Careil dans *Leibniz, Descartes et Spinoza*.

³⁴ "Jus Dei non solum ab ejus potentia sed a sapientia ac bonitate pendet, contra Hobbium et Spinozam", *Textes inédits*, p. 667, note b.

³⁵ "On parle improprement de puissance à propos de la force d'exister", sur *Ethique* I, prop. 11: éd. Gerhardt I, p. 145, traduit par Carraud, *Philosophie* 2 (1984), p. 12.

³⁶ Voir notamment *Théodicée* § 171-174.

³⁷ "Si omnia necessitate quadam ex divina natura emanant, omniaque possibilia etiam existunt aequae facile male erit bonis et malis. Tolletur ergo moralis philosophia"; note 3 à la lettre de Spinoza à Oldenburg de décembre 1675: éd. Gerhardt I, p. 124.

sibles et toutes les vérités éternelles. Le dernier complément est l'amour ou la volonté qui choisit parmi les possibles ce qui est le meilleur et c'est là l'origine des vérités contingentes et du monde actuel. Ainsi la volonté naît lorsque la force est déterminée par la lumière.³⁸

La puissance se règle donc sur la sagesse (comparaison de tous les mondes possibles) laquelle est déterminée par la bonté (choix nécessaire du meilleur). Dieu aurait pu ne pas créer et d'autres mondes sont pensables, donc le monde qui existe est contingent; mais s'il a choisi de créer, rien ne peut l'empêcher de créer la série des choses contingentes qui s'est distinguée de toutes les autres comme un optimum. La différence entre entendement et volonté n'est pas une différence anthropomorphique relevant d'une psychologie des facultés; c'est d'abord une différence logique: l'entendement divin est le lieu des possibles et le fondement de leur réalité;³⁹ sa volonté est la loi des compossibles existant: *potest omnia, vult optima*. Si tout le concevable devait nécessairement exister, alors il n'y aurait pas de raison de l'existence de ceci plutôt que de cela et la *non considération du principe de la raison du bien équivaut pour Leibniz à une insuffisance de raison*, à une indétermination du deuxième moment du principe de raison suffisante, à savoir pourquoi la chose non seulement existe mais pourquoi elle existe *ainsi*⁴⁰ et non pas autrement. Le principe de raison suffisante commande toute la morale et toute la théologie leibniziennes.

Il nous reste à voir maintenant comment cette divergence dans l'articulation de la puissance, de la sagesse et de l'amour en Dieu détermine la conception de la gloire divine, du rapport entre philosophie et théologie et donc aussi la pertinence de la question de la théodicée.

³⁸ Lettre à Morell; dans la transcription d'A. Robinet, *G.W. Leibniz, Le meilleur des mondes par la balance de l'Europe* (Paris, 1994), p. 117, de sept. 1698: *Textes inédits*, p. 139 et *Théodicée* § 150.

³⁹ *Théodicée* § 184. Voir aussi la traduction par P. Schrecker de *l'Origine radicale* (Paris, 1966), p. 87.

⁴⁰ Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi*, éd. Y. Belaval (Paris, 1966), p. 30; *Monadologie* § 32, éd. Gerhardt VI, p. 612; *Théodicée* § 44.

PERTINENCE DE LA QUESTION DE LA THÉODICÉE ET GLOIRE DE DIEU

Il est clair que la *question de la théodicée* est aux yeux de Spinoza le type même de la fausse question, voire même de la question impie. C'est par excellence le genre de question qui naît d'une conception anthropomorphique de Dieu. Dieu n'a pas à passer devant le tribunal de la raison pour être justifié de l'accusation d'être l'auteur du mal puisque le mal est relatif à un point de vue modal, partiel, humain et qu'il n'y a pas de mal du point de vue du tout; "la connaissance du mal est une connaissance inadéquate" et "si l'esprit humain n'avait que des idées adéquates, il ne formerait aucune notion du mal".⁴¹ Donc Dieu qui n'a que des idées adéquates, ignore le mal. Chercher à disculper Dieu de la responsabilité du mal serait supposer que Dieu aurait pu agir autrement, donc qu'il n'est pas entièrement déterminé par les lois de sa nature, donc qu'il n'est pas libre. S'il y a bien un *problème du mal*, à savoir comment le combattre, comment l'éviter autant que possible, ce problème est moins un problème métaphysique qu'un problème politique qui n'apparaît qu'avec la loi.⁴²

Pour Leibniz cette question relève de la théologie naturelle: comment un Dieu infiniment bon et tout puissant a-t-il pu admettre ou permettre le mal? La réponse relève à la fois de la philosophie (le mal est une condition, l'accompagnement d'un plus grand bien, métaphysiquement lié au statut de la créature et à la finitude qu'il implique) et de la théologie révélée (mystères de l'Incarnation et de la Rédemption).

La question de la théodicée (qui pour disculper Dieu, doit admettre comme légitime le discours antérieur de l'accusation) occulte cependant une autre question, plus fondamentale, qui est celle de la *gloire de Dieu*. Cette question, formulée doublement dans le langage de la foi et dans celui de la philosophie, est présente chez Spinoza. La gloire, en son sens général et passionnel, désigne "une joie qu'accompagne l'idée d'une action nôtre que nous imaginons être louée par d'autres".⁴³ C'est bien à ce sens que ressortit la définition leibnizienne de la gloire de Dieu donnée dans le *Systema theologicum* et

⁴¹ *Ethique* IV, 64 et cor.

⁴² D'où la reprise spinozienne du mot de saint Paul: "il n'est pas de péché avant la loi".

⁴³ *Ethique* III, déf. des affects, 30.

qui s'achève sur une condamnation implicite de Spinoza:

Cette suprême intelligence a donc créé d'autres esprits pour en tirer sa gloire et les dirige par un gouvernement parfaitement juste de telle sorte que celui qui comprendrait entièrement la raison de l'économie divine aurait saisi le modèle de la plus parfaite république dans laquelle le sage ne pourrait rien désirer ou réclamer de plus de ses vœux. Aussi faut-il repousser entièrement ceux qui conçoivent la divinité comme une force suprême mais aveugle, de qui toutes choses émaneraient indistinctement et poussées vers l'existence par une sorte de nécessité, sans discernement du beau et du bien, comme si ces notions étaient des conceptions arbitraires n'existant que dans l'imagination humaine et sans réalité dans la nature.⁴⁴

Ce langage de la gloire est le type même du langage anthropomorphique, que condamne par ailleurs Leibniz tout comme Spinoza.⁴⁵ Il est en effet un autre sens de la gloire de Dieu, qui correspond d'ailleurs aux textes sacrés⁴⁶ et qui identifie gloire, béatitude, contentement, salut et amour intellectuel de Dieu.⁴⁷ Faudrait-il opposer alors un Leibniz encore empêtré dans le langage anthropomorphe de la religion superstitieuse et un Spinoza, seul vrai philosophe parce que considérant la gloire divine rationnellement, hors des jeux fantasmatiques de l'imagination, *sub specie aeternitatis*, sous la catégorie de l'éternité, donc de la nécessité? Bien sûr que non.

Il y a chez nos deux philosophes un même souci d'éloigner les hommes des fausses idées qui représentent Dieu comme un despote;⁴⁸ la gloire de Dieu est l'ombre portée de l'harmonie universelle⁴⁹ et surtout, en son sens vrai, cette gloire se confond avec l'omnivalité du principe de raison, comme l'établit le *Discours de métaphysique*.⁵⁰

Mieux encore c'est la connaissance philosophique des perfections de Dieu et de son ouvrage qui constitue la vraie gloire de Dieu et qui est la source de la vraie piété:

⁴⁴ *Systema theologicum* § 2. Voir aussi *Théodicée* § 79 et 109.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Théodicée* § 114; 125; 179 et *Ethique*, I, app.

⁴⁶ Isaïe 58 qui associe gloire et béatitude, cité en *TTP* V, évoqué en *Ethique* V, prop. 36, schol.

⁴⁷ *Ethique* V, 36, schol. Sur ce scholie, voir P.F. Moreau, "Métaphysique de la gloire", *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 119 (1994-1), p. 55-64.

⁴⁸ Voir *Théodicée* § 6.

⁴⁹ Leibniz, *Oeuvres*, éd. A. Foucher de Careil (Paris, 1859-1875), 7 vols., VII, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Discours de Métaphysique* § III, éd. Gerhardt IV, p. 428-429.

Rien ne sert plus à la solide dévotion que la véritable philosophie qui fait connaître et admirer les merveilles de Dieu et qui en publie la gloire comme il faut. Car comment peut-on aimer Dieu et le glorifier sans en connaître la beauté? Mais le but de tout est la pratique des vertus morales pour le bien public ou (ce qui est la même chose) pour la gloire de Dieu. Ainsi toute dévotion qui ne nous propose pas quelque vérité considérable sur les perfections et ouvrages de Dieu ou qui ne tend point à produire quelque bien est une simple cérémonie qui ne doit servir qu'à exciter les hommes à ce qu'il y a de réel dans la piété.⁵¹

On pourrait dans ce fil des conceptions métaphysiques, souligner d'autres convergences, déjà amplement analysées par les commentateurs. Notamment la détermination de la liberté comme obéissance aux lois de sa nature qui fait que Dieu seul est parfaitement libre et que l'individu est déterminé à agir par sa notion complète chez Leibniz, par les lois de sa nature individuelle chez Spinoza. La différence est ici dans la pertinence ou non d'une double lecture, selon les causes efficientes (règne de la nature) et selon les causes finales (règne de la grâce), donc dans la prise en compte ou non de la *ratio boni* dans la détermination du principe de raison.

PHILOSOPHIE ET THÉOLOGIE

La question des rapports entre philosophie et théologie est un exemple typique des questions vives ou controversées au XVII^e siècle, comme le montre l'historique leibnizien du début du *Discours préliminaire*.⁵² Spinoza défend le principe d'une séparation stricte; Leibniz la refuse parce qu'elle prive la théologie de toute valeur rationnelle mais il rejette aussi une confusion fréquente chez ceux qui "commettent ensemble la philosophie et la théologie":

comme on pourrait [...] commettre mal à propos les vérités naturelles et les vérités révélées, les savants se sont attachés à distinguer ce qu'il y a de nécessaire et d'indispensable dans les vérités naturelles ou philosophiques d'avec ce qui ne l'est point.⁵³

Mais les définitions de la théologie révélée diffèrent grandement: Spinoza identifie la théologie à la foi ou à la prophétie, donc à une

⁵¹ Lettre à Burnett, 24 août 1697, éd. Gerhardt III, p. 218.

⁵² *Discours préliminaire*, § 11-17.

⁵³ *Discours préliminaire* § 17; voir aussi le § 5.

connaissance naturelle imaginative, bien qu'il admette que le prophète ait des capacités hors du commun pour prévoir l'avenir; Leibniz, suivant la tradition, voit dans la théologie révélée une discipline dont la source de vérité est surnaturelle mais dont le traitement peut et doit être rationnel puisqu'il envisage même d'écrire la théologie *methodo mathematica* et qu'il affirme en avoir fait lui-même quelques échantillons; toutefois, cette rédaction exige préalablement celle d'*Eléments de philosophie* en ordre mathématique.⁵⁴ Loin qu'il y ait un conflit ou simplement une indifférence réciproque de la philosophie et de la théologie, il y a entre elles collaboration et harmonie de sorte que "celui qui enseigne la théologie rencontrera partout la philosophie".⁵⁵ La théologie est le but final de la connaissance, le point le plus haut des sciences qui concernent les esprits et une discipline architectonique qui englobe la morale et la politique.⁵⁶ Bien que fondée sur la révélation, la théologie chrétienne ne devient une discipline achevée que jointe à la théologie naturelle, "tirée des axiomes de la raison éternelle".⁵⁷ Pour Leibniz, l'articulation de la théologie naturelle et de la théologie révélée est la condition même de la construction d'une bonne morale et d'une bonne politique et notamment de la jurisprudence universelle ou du rapport harmonieux entre les États.⁵⁸ Pour Spinoza, leur séparation stricte est la condition *sine qua non* de l'instauration de la paix civile tandis que les rapports inter-étatiques relèvent du droit de nature, donc du droit de la force, et non pas d'un droit rationnel fondé sur Dieu: morale et politique ne se confondent pas plus que philosophie et théologie, science et foi, raison et imagination.

⁵⁴ Lettre à Burnett du 1/11 fév. 1697, éd. Gerhardt III, p. 190.

⁵⁵ Lettre I à des Bosses, 2 fév. 1706, éd. Gerhardt II, p. 294.

⁵⁶ Lettre au RP Bouvet du 2 déc. 1697.

⁵⁷ *Nouveaux Essais* IV, vii, 11. "La théologie chrétienne qui est la vraie médecine des âmes, est fondée sur la révélation qui répond à l'expérience; mais pour en faire un corps accompli, il faut y joindre la théologie naturelle qui est tirée des axiomes de la raison éternelle. Ce principe même que la véracité est un attribut de Dieu, sur lequel vous reconnaissez que la certitude de la révélation est fondée, n'est-il pas une maxime prise de la théologie naturelle?" éd. Gerhardt V, p. 396.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gaston Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et théodicée selon Leibniz* (Paris, 1953).

	philosophie; source	théologie	rapport Phil/Théol.
Spinoza	science; démonstration; raison	foi, révélation, prophétie; certitude morale / imagination	séparation stricte
Leibniz	science; vérité démontrée; raison	vérité révélée, surnaturelle, d'essence rationnelle; certitude absolue	subordination sans conflit de la philosophie à la théologie

PAS DE COMBAT DE LA RAISON CONTRE LA FOI

Spinoza, comme Leibniz, s'oppose au fidéisme à la manière de Bayle mais pour des raisons inverses. Tous deux reconnaissent la nécessité de la raison pour admettre la révélation et discerner entre vrais et faux prophètes, vraies et fausses révélations;⁵⁹ tous deux combattent ceux qui, comme Meyer ou Keckermann, prétendent rendre raison d'un mystère comme la Trinité. Mais, pour Spinoza c'est parce qu'il n'est pas de mystères; que le mystère est un mot vide, dénué de référent, le masque de l'ignorance.⁶⁰ Pour Leibniz la raison peut *soutenir* le mystère sans pouvoir le comprendre⁶¹ parce que le mystère, comme le miracle, est au delà de la raison sans y être contraire, c'est-à-dire qu'il va à l'encontre des lois de notre monde ou de la nécessité hypothétique, qu'il est au dessus de la nature des choses sensibles⁶² mais ne contredit pas la nécessité géométrique ou métaphysique, celle qui vaut pour tout le pensable, Dieu inclus. Au dessus de la raison signifie toujours pour Leibniz au dessus d'une raison créée et non pas au dessus de la raison en soi.⁶³

⁵⁹ Spinoza, *TTP*, II et XV; Leibniz: "Il appartient à la droite raison, en sa qualité d'interprète naturel de Dieu, de juger l'autorité de tous ceux qui prétendent interpréter la volonté divine avant de les admettre; mais quand ces nouveaux interprètes ont une fois démontré la légitimité de leur titre, c'est à la raison à son tour à subir la loi de la foi". *Systema theologicum* § 10.

⁶⁰ Voir la lettre 75 à Oldenburg et son commentaire par Leibniz, éd. Gerhardt I, p. 123-127.

⁶¹ *Discours préliminaire* § 5, 56-58, 63.

⁶² "Miracula Philosophiae conciliari posse arbitror: si scilicet Miracula intelligamus non quae sint supra natura rerum sed quae sint supra naturam corporum sensibilibus"; éd. Gerhardt I, p. 124, note 5.

⁶³ *Discours préliminaire* § 23.

PLURALISATION DE LA NATURE ET DE LA RATIONALITÉ

En conséquence, la notion de *surature* ou de surnaturel est pour Spinoza une notion absurde et contradictoire puisqu'il n'y a rien en dehors de ou au-delà de la nature. Pour Leibniz en revanche, il y a surnature parce qu'il y a création et transcendance divine: la nature est le créé, la surnature, le propre du créateur. Pour expliquer les *vrais miracles* c'est-à-dire les événements religieusement significatifs qui se produisent en dehors des lois connues de la nature, Spinoza fait jouer des lois naturelles mal connues, comme on le voit sur l'explication strictement naturaliste du miracle de Josué;⁶⁴ Leibniz présente une explication métaphysique, notamment par une conception plus exacte de la substance et du rapport de l'âme et du corps, par ex. pour la résurrection. Il en va de même des *mystères* pour lesquels Leibniz propose une explication analogique permettant de donner à la notion un sens obscur mais effectif, comme l'Incarnation qui s'explique, sans se comprendre, analogiquement, par la relation de l'âme et du corps⁶⁵ tandis que Spinoza ne leur donne qu'un sens symbolique ou spirituel.

Cette pluralisation du concept de nature chez Leibniz, et son refus de la conception spinozienne d'une nature une et strictement homogène, obéissant toujours, sur tous les plans, au même type de lois, se retrouve dans la pluralisation de la *nécessité*. Chez Spinoza, il ne saurait y avoir qu'une sorte de nécessité, suite à l'identification du possible et de l'intelligible, de l'intelligible et du productible par Dieu, donc du possible et du réel advenu, présent ou à venir. Nier cette identité en supposant du possible qui ne serait jamais actualisé, donc du créable qui ne serait jamais créé, c'est nier la toute puissance divine.⁶⁶

Pour Leibniz, cette identification du possible et du réel ruine toute philosophie morale: *si omnia necessitate quadam ex divina natura emanant, omniaque possibilia etiam existunt, aequae facile male erit bonis et malis. Tolle tur ergo moralis philosophia.*⁶⁷

Leibniz affine donc la définition de la nécessité en en distinguant

⁶⁴ *TTP* VI.

⁶⁵ *Discours préliminaire* § 54-55 et *Systema theologicum* § 14.

⁶⁶ *Ethique* I, prop. 17, schol.

⁶⁷ Annotation 3 de la lettre 75 de Spinoza à Oldenburg, éd. Gerhardt I, p. 124. Voir aussi une note de Leibniz du 2 décembre 1676, après son entrevue avec Spinoza : "Si omnia possibilia existunt nulla opus esset existendi ratione et sufficeret sola possibilitas". L. Couturat, *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz* (Paris, 1903; Hildesheim, 1961), p. 530.

trois sortes: la nécessité métaphysique ou géométrique, la nécessité physique ou hypothétique et la nécessité morale qui implique le choix du meilleur.⁶⁸ Les vérités métaphysiques ou géométriques sont nécessaires strictement mais il y a “dispensation” des lois physiques ordinaires dans le cas des miracles et des mystères: par ex. l’existence et la participation d’un corps en un seul lieu est une loi physique qui se trouve “dispensée” dans l’eucharistie.⁶⁹

Dans les deux philosophies cependant, on retrouve le même souci de démontrer qu’un déterminisme strict est compatible avec la liberté de l’homme et une conception progressiste de l’histoire.⁷⁰ Ces points sont assez connus pour que nous nous dispensions d’y insister.

Il vaut la peine, en revanche, de s’attarder sur la conception de la rationalité. Bien que ce point mériterait un bien plus ample développement, je me contenterai de souligner ceci:

Chez Spinoza, la raison est une et homogène, quels que soient ses domaines d’application: c’est toujours la connaissance des idées adéquates qui considère les choses sous la catégorie de la nécessité,⁷¹ et donc les perçoit sous la catégorie de l’éternité.⁷² En vertu de cette unité et de l’unité de la nature et, en outre, de la nature et de la raison, “la raison ne demande rien contre la nature”⁷³ et elle n’enseigne rien non plus contre elle.⁷⁴

Chez Leibniz, la raison, définie comme “un enchaînement inviolable de vérités”,⁷⁵ envisage également les choses du point de vue de la nécessité; mais, comme il y a divers plans de nécessité logiquement articulés selon la prévalence du meilleur, la raison se pluralise selon qu’elle déploie le système des causes du point de vue des causes efficientes ou de celui des causes finales. Il n’y a pas de conflit entre ces deux systèmes explicatifs puisque le règne de la nature est parallèle au règne de la grâce et que “les choses conduisent à la grâce par les voies mêmes de la nature”.⁷⁶ Mais par ex. s’il nous est

⁶⁸ *Discours de Métaphysique* § XIII; *Théodicée* § 2 et 349; *Origine radicale*, Lettre à Clarke aout 1676; *Confessio philosophi*.

⁶⁹ *Discours préliminaire* § 18.

⁷⁰ Voir dans le *TTP*, IV, l’origine de la civilisation et les conditions de son progrès et chez Leibniz, *Origine radicale*.

⁷¹ *Ethique* II, prop. 44.

⁷² *Ibid.*, cor. 2.

⁷³ *Ethique* IV, prop. 18, schol.

⁷⁴ *TP*, III, 6.

⁷⁵ *Discours préliminaire* § 1 et 23.

⁷⁶ *Monadologie* § 88. Voir aussi le parallélisme entre la suite des mouvements

possible de comprendre en gros que le choix de ce monde par Dieu obéit au principe du meilleur (donc à l'ordre de l'intelligence du bien) et non pas à une "nécessité brute" (celle de l'ordre spinozien de la puissance selon Leibniz), il nous est impossible de comprendre le détail de ce choix et comment ce système d'enchaînements de causes efficientes traduit dans l'ordre de l'effectivité un autre système d'enchaînement aussi rigoureux, celui des causes finales.

En pluralisant la rationalité selon son objet, son domaine et son principe architectonique (le bien ou la puissance), Leibniz fait du système spinoziste un point de vue vrai mais partiel, sur l'architecture du monde. D'où ses affirmations réitérées:

Vous savez que j'étais allé un peu trop loin ailleurs et que je commençais à pencher du côté des spinosistes qui ne laissent qu'une puissance infinie à Dieu sans reconnaître ni perfection ni sagesse à son égard et, méprisant la recherche des causes finales, dérivent tout d'une nécessité brute. Mais ces nouvelles lumières m'en ont guéri....⁷⁷

Spinoza affirmait connaître la philosophie vraie; Leibniz prétend proposer la philosophie la meilleure, celle qui intègre en les éclairant mutuellement les points de vue vrais mais partiels et – faux de se tenir pour complets – des philosophies précédentes. Mais on ne concilie pas le refus principiel et fondateur de la finalité, rattachée à une perspective humaine et rien qu'humaine, et sa position en tant que principe architectonique. Entre Spinoza et Leibniz s'établit donc ici un dialogue de sourds.

CONNIVENCES

Est-ce à dire que derrière ces oppositions frontales, il n'y a pas de connivences? Je ne le crois pas. Et d'abord sur l'unité de la raison en l'homme et en Dieu: la raison humaine, chez Spinoza, est une partie (mode fini) de l'entendement infini, mode infini immédiat de l'attribut pensée. En dépit de son refus de considérer l'esprit humain

dans le corps et des appétitions et perceptions dans l'âme (*Théodicée*, Préface, p. 42). Ce parallélisme diffère du 'parallélisme' des attributs chez Spinoza d'une part parce qu'il n'y a que deux ordres parallèles et non pas une infinité comme chez Spinoza et d'autre part parce qu'il y a incontestablement chez Leibniz, primauté de l'âme sur le corps.

⁷⁷ *Nouveaux Essais*, p. 65. Ces "nouvelles lumières" désignent les découvertes concernant la dynamique et la réélaboration afférente de la notion de substance.

comme une *partie* de l'esprit divin, puisqu'il en est un *effet*, dérivant en tant que créature du choix divin entre les mondes pensables et pensés par Dieu, Leibniz reprend aussi, à l'occasion, le vocabulaire du tout et de la partie contre les contempteurs de la raison humaine:

comme cette portion de raison que nous possédons est un don de Dieu et consiste dans la lumière naturelle qui nous est restée au milieu de la corruption, cette portion est conforme avec le tout et elle ne diffère de celle qui est en Dieu que comme une goutte d'eau diffère de l'Océan ou plutôt comme le fini de l'infini.⁷⁸

On pourrait encore souligner le refus de l'anthropomorphisme et de l'anthropocentrisme de la pensée théologique commune.⁷⁹ Dans ses *annotations sur l'Ethique*, Leibniz écrit: "suit un Appendice contre ceux qui pensent que Dieu produit un effet en vue d'une fin où il mêle le vrai avec le faux. Bien qu'il soit vrai que tout ne soit pas fait pour l'homme, il ne suit pas que Dieu agisse sans volonté ni entendement du bien".⁸⁰ L'accord le plus net porte sur la conception de la religion naturelle et universelle.

STATUT DE LA RELIGION UNIVERSELLE

La religion universelle est chez Spinoza la religion naturelle conforme à la philosophie; chez Leibniz la religion naturelle est le fondement commun de toutes les religions et c'est la religion primitive de l'humanité, le fond rationnel de la religion des païens comme des chinois.

Leur contenu est très proche: un petit nombre de dogmes fondamentaux (le *credo minimum* de *TTP XIV*; chez Leibniz l'existence de Dieu, l'immortalité de l'âme, la croyance en des récompenses ou châtements futurs) et une pratique de justice et de charité, le respect de la règle d'or. On pourrait montrer que, chez nos deux philosophes, la vraie piété se détermine et se manifeste par les œuvres bonnes et non pas par des croyances orthodoxes ou par l'observance de cérémonies qui n'ont jamais qu'une valeur relative et propédeutique,⁸¹ encore que leur justification soit éthique chez Leibniz et politique chez Spinoza.

⁷⁸ *Dicours préliminaire* § 61, p. 84.

⁷⁹ Spinoza, *Ethique* I, app.; Leibniz, *Théodicée* § 118 et 123.

⁸⁰ éd. Gerhard I, p. 150.

⁸¹ Spinoza, *TTP V* et Leibniz, *Théodicée*, la préface opposant les "formalités de dévotion" à la vraie piété.

Pourquoi alors est-il besoin d'une révélation? Parce que, répond Spinoza, sans la révélation nous pourrions douter du salut de presque tout le genre humain.⁸² Le critère de la vraie révélation, c'est d'enseigner la justice et la charité et de laisser à chacun la liberté d'interpréter les textes sacrés de manière à lui faciliter au mieux la pratique de l'obéissance. Parce que, répond en écho Leibniz, les hommes usent mal de leur raison et qu'il a fallu que Jésus-Christ vienne pour "achever de faire passer en loi les enseignements de la religion naturelle et lui donner l'autorité d'un dogme public".⁸³ La religion naturelle pourrait suffire au salut et à la béatitude si les hommes savaient écouter leur raison, "voix naturelle de Dieu".⁸⁴

Cette confiance en Dieu qui nous rend contents et qui nous fait croire qu'il fait tout réussir pour le plus grand bien des bons, est proprement ce qu'on pourrait appeler la foi de la religion naturelle qui va aussi bien au delà de ce qu'on voit que la révélée.⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

On pourrait caractériser les deux systèmes de Spinoza et de Leibniz comme des philosophies de l'Être, et non pas de la conscience ou du sujet, comme deux philosophies théocentrées. Mais il est clair qu'il ne s'agit pas du même Dieu, ni préalablement de la même substance. Du monisme de la substance à la pluralité des monades, on est passé d'un Dieu impersonnel immanent à un Dieu personnel transcendant, d'une raison aussi une et homogène que la nature qu'elle ordonne à une rationalité multiple, hiérarchisée selon des niveaux et des modèles hétérogènes d'intelligibilité, autorisant la présence d'une surrationalité. Le statut du naturalisme, comme pleine affirmation de l'Être ou comme paganisme étranger à la moralité s'en trouve inversé. En dépit des correspondances notables entre une philosophie de la puissance (Spinoza) et une philosophie de la force (Leibniz), la confrontation des deux philosophies religieuses peut bien nuancer l'opposition radicale affirmée par Leibniz; elle ne saurait aboutir à une conciliation.

Spinoza affirme avoir trouvé la *vraie philosophie* et laisse à la foi le

⁸² *TTP* fin du ch. XV.

⁸³ *Théodicée*, Préface.

⁸⁴ Lettre à Morell, 29 nov. 1698, *Textes inédits*, p. 138.

⁸⁵ A Sophie Charlotte, éd. Gerhardt VI, p. 527-8.

soin de persuader chacun que le salut est possible par la voie de l'obéissance à la règle de justice et de charité. Leibniz cherche à construire le discours rationnel sur Dieu qui vaudra universellement comme fondement de tous les discours de théologie positive. "La métaphysique est la vraie théologie".⁸⁶

Je commence en philosophe mais je finis en théologien. Un de mes grands principes est que rien ne se fait sans raison. C'est un principe de philosophie. Cependant dans le fond, ce n'est autre chose que l'aveu de la sagesse divine quoique je n'en parle pas d'abord.⁸⁷

Nous ne nierons donc pas, pour finir, que ce dialogue entre le philosophe pur et le philosophe théologien ne soit un dialogue interminable et biaisé puisqu'il repose sur des principes et des perspectives irréductibles et irréconciliables. Faute d'avoir véritablement réfuté Spinoza, Leibniz s'en était-il suffisamment démarqué, quoiqu'il ait assurément écrit la *Théodicée* pour réfuter le nécessaire spinozien et prouver que Dieu n'est pas cause du mal.

C'est justement par ces monades que le spinozisme est détruit car il y a autant de substances véritables et pour ainsi dire de miroirs vivants de l'univers toujours subsistants ou d'Univers concentrés qu'il y a de monades au lieu que selon Spinoza, il n'y a qu'une seule substance. *Il aurait donc raison s'il n'y avait pas de monades*, alors tout, hors de Dieu serait passager et s'évanouirait en simples accidents ou modifications puisqu'il n'y aurait point la base des substances dans les choses laquelle consiste dans l'existence des monades.⁸⁸

Ses contemporains en jugèrent autrement puisqu'en 1723, Joachim Lange, écrivant une *Causa Dei et religionis naturalis adversus atheismum* critiqua une filiation entre les stoïciens, Spinoza et Leibniz et accusa l'hypothèse de l'harmonie préétablie d'être un rejeton de la fausse philosophie spinozienne, *pseudophilosophiae spinozianae foetus*.⁸⁹

Pour nous, qui éprouvons autant de bonheur à penser avec l'un qu'avec l'autre, nous nous abstiendrons de ce simulacre de tribunal et continuerons d'exercer nos capacités de jugement à les comprendre même si, comme le remarquait Belaval, il soit quasiment impossible de mener ce genre de confrontation sans une préférence, secrète ou avouée.

⁸⁶ *Théodicée* § 184.

⁸⁷ Bodemann, Catalogue, Phil.I, 39, cité par Leon Brunschvicg, *Spinoza et ses contemporains* (Paris, 1951), p. 251.

⁸⁸ Lettre à Bourguet, décembre 1714, éd. Gerhardt III, p. 575.

⁸⁹ Cité par Belaval, "Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza", p. 551.

“... SPINOZAM TOTA ARMENTA IN BELGIO SEQUI DUCEM”: THE RECEPTION OF THE EARLY DUTCH SPINOZISTS IN GERMANY

Winfried Schröder

The process called ‘reception of a philosophical theory’ and the emergence of ‘-isms’, philosophical schools or currents, would be described in an over-simplified manner if we assumed that only (a) the theory adopted and (b) those who adopted the theory were involved in it. At least one more factor involved in this process (a factor which is usually neglected in the studies on early Spinozism) must be taken into consideration: the understanding and reception of a philosopher’s work depends to no little extent on the way in which earlier interpreters and especially his disciples represented it. The dissemination of Cartesianism in 17th century Europe offers many examples of how the master’s work was read through his disciples’ eyes. Hobbes, who originally met with extreme hostility, had disciples like Van Velthuysen and Pufendorf who offered favourable readings of his philosophy of law. It was they who were mainly responsible for the fact that continental philosophers were far less engaged in the hunting of the *Leviathan* than their British colleagues. This fact is well known, but it has strangely failed to stimulate research into the way in which Spinoza’s disciples—that is to say, the Dutch Spinozists of the late 17th and early 18th century¹—influenced the fortune of their master’s philosophy abroad.²

This research was not neglected because of lack of documents. On the contrary: The reception of the Dutch Spinozists outside the

¹ Cf. Hubertus G. Hubbeling, “Zur frühen Spinozarezeption in den Niederlanden”, in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. Karlfried Gründer & Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (Heidelberg, 1984), p. 149–180; H.J. Siebrand, *Spinoza and the Netherlands. An Inquiry into the Early Reception of His Philosophy of Religion* (Assen-Maastricht, 1988).

² Cf. Leo Baeck, *Spinozas erste Einwirkungen auf Deutschland* (Berlin, 1895); Max Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1897; repr. Aalen, 1986); David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (London, 1984); Winfried Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* (Würzburg, 1987); Rüdiger Otto, *Studien zur Spinozarezeption in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994).

Netherlands might deserve a colloquium of its own, because of its variety and the sheer amount of translations, reviews, critical examinations and refutations written about them. In what follows, I shall be concentrating on the reception of the Dutch Spinozists in Germany which by far surpassed the reactions to them elsewhere in Europe.

For historians of 17th and 18th century philosophy, the most interesting figures among the disciples of Spinoza might be authors like Abraham Cuffeler, who had a congenial understanding of Spinoza's system, or scientists like Herman Boerhaave.³ These—in a strict sense—philosophical Spinozists, like Cuffeler,⁴ Wyermars,⁵ Deurhoff,⁶ and even Koerbagh⁷, were attentively read in Germany.

³ Cf. Wim Klever, "Herman Boerhaave (1668–1738) oder Spinozismus als rein mechanische Wissenschaft des Menschen", in: *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Hanna Delf et al. (Berlin, 1994), p. 75–93.

⁴ Jakob Staalkopff (Praes.) & Burchard Grammann (Resp.), *De Spinozismo post Spinozam* (Greifswald, 1708), p. 8; Jakob Wilhelm Feuerlin, *Dissertatio ontologica De substantia, erroribus nonnullis opposita* (Altdorf, 1728), p. 22 ff.; Andreas Gottlieb Masch, *Verzeichnis der erheblichsten freidenkerischen Schriften*, in: *Idem, Abhandlung von der Religion der Heiden und der Christen* (Halle, 1753), p. 95; Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, *Nachrichten von einer hallischen Bibliothek*, vol. I (Halle, 1748), p. 141–148; Jakob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae* (Leipzig, 1742–1767), vol. IV-2, p. 701; Johann Vogt, *Catalogus historico-criticus librorum rariorum*. (Hamburg, 1753; 4th ed.), p. 226 ff.; Johann Anton Trinius, *Freydenker-Lexicon* (Leipzig-Bernburg, 1759–65; repr. Turin, 1966), p. 332 ff. There were also direct contacts between Cuffeler and German philosophers of that period, namely Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, as we learn from Pieter van Gent's correspondence with the latter; cf. *Briefe an E. W. von Tschirnhaus von Pieter van Gent*, ed. C. Reinhardt (Freiberg, 1911), p. 15; cf. Wim Klever, "La clef d'un nom: Petrus van Gent", *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), p. 169–202; R. Vermij, "Le cercle de Tschirnhaus", *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), p. 145 ff.

⁵ Cf. [Christoph August Heumann], "Nachrichten von einem neuen Spinozisten-Henrico Wirmarsio", *Acta philosophorum* (1716), p. 115–144; Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, *Nachrichten von einer hallischen Bibliothek*, vol. 5 (Halle, 1750), p. 388–393; [Johann Christian Gottfried Jahn], *Verzeichnis der Bücher so gesamlet von Johann Christian Gottfried Jahn* (Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1755–57), p. 2192; Michael Lilienthal, *Theologische Bibliothec, Das ist: Richtiges Verzeichniß, zulängliche Beschreibung und bescheidene Beurtheilung der dahin gehörigen Vornehmsten Schriften welche in M. Michael Lilienthals Bücher-Vorrath befindlich sind* (Königsberg, 1741), p. 268 ff.; [Anon. Review of] "Den Ingebeelde Chaos, door Hendrik Wyermars", *Onschuldige Nachrichten Von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* (1717), p. 424 ff.

⁶ Cf. Jakob Friedrich Reimmann, *Historia universalis atheismi et atheorum falso et merito suspectorum* (Hildesheim, 1725), ed. Winfried Schröder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1992), p. 567 ff.; Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae* vol. IV-2, p. 705 ff.; Trinius, *Freydenker-Lexicon*, p. 173–176; Johann Georg Walch, *Historische und Theologische Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten, welche sonderlich ausser der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche entstanden* (Jena, 1733), vol. 2, p. 924–930; Joachim Lange, *Causa Dei et religionis naturalis adversus atheismum, et, quae eum gignit, aut promovet*,

But the reactions to them are of little interest. They provoked the same counterblast as did Spinoza. In particular it is disappointing to see how the early readers reacted over Cuffeler's interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy: Cuffeler's mitigated version of Spinozism was simply rejected. Nobody seriously examined his arguments by which he had tried to escape the charge of immoralism, or his redefinition of the concept of 'modificatio' by which he tried to prove that Spinozism was no kind of pantheism.⁸

By far the largest number of pages were written about a group of Dutch authors who were called "Spinozists on the pulpit",⁹ authors like Jarig Jelles¹⁰ who sympathized with Spinoza, and authors who seemed to have adopted or in fact had adopted some of Spinoza's teachings, combining them with a heterodox type of Christian theology. Among these there are some authors whose inclination to Spinozism has meanwhile been doubted for good reasons. But Pontiaan van Hattem and his circle, or Jacob Roggeveen, who had been facing the charge of Spinozism from the orthodox Dutch theologians, were regarded as genuine Spinozists by the German pub-

pseudophilosophiam veterum ac recentiorum, praesertim Stoicam, Spinozianam ac Wolfianam (Halle, 1728), p. 122.

⁷ Even before Spinoza's death, echoes of Koerbagh's *Bloemhof* can be found in Matthias Knutzen's atheistic pamphlets, cf. Knutzen, "Amicus Amicis Amica!" in: Johann Musaeus, *Ableinung Der ausgesprengten abscheulichen Verleumdung* (Jena, 1675; 2nd ed.), [appendix] p. 1-3; cf. Werner Pfoh, *Matthias Knutzen. Ein deutscher Atheist und revolutionärer Demokrat des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1963), p. 87; in particular, on Knutzen's allusion to the *Bloemhof*, cf. Wolfgang Gericke, "Matthias Knutzen, der erste deutsche Atheist", *Theologische Versuche* 5 (1975), p. 83-107, esp. 92, 104 ff. Koerbagh's other work, *Een licht schynende in duystere plaatsen*, was read too. Cf. Johann Vogt, *Catalogus historico-criticus*, p. 383 ff.; Lilienthal, *Theologische Bibliothec*, p. 1129.

⁸ Cf. Johann Franz Budde, *Theses theologicae de atheismo et superstitione* (Jena, 1717), p. 174-177. (Bayle's rather superficial review in his *Nouvelles de la republique des lettres* 1684, p. 320, is no less disappointing.) Nevertheless, twenty years after the *Specimen artis ratiocinandi* had been published, Johann Georg Wachter shared this mitigated version of Spinoza's ethical theory; cf. Wachter, *Origines juris naturalis* (1704), ed. W. Schröder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1995), p. 199-260. There is, however, no convincing evidence that Wachter had actually read the *Specimen*, although it seems rather likely that he knew it.

⁹ Joachim Lange, *Bescheidene und ausführliche Entdeckung Der falschen und schädlichen Philosophie in dem Wolffianischen Systemate Metaphysico* (Halle, 1724), p. 556: "...seinen verdeckten und versteckten Spinozismus gar auf die Cantzel gebracht".

¹⁰ Cf. Jakob Staalkopff (Praes.) & Philipp Andersen (Resp.), *Benedictum de Spinoza, atheismi convictum contra autorem praefationis in opera eius posthuma [...] publico eruditiorum examini sistet* (Greifswald, 1707).

lic. Even an unphilosophic and innocent *chrétien sans Eglise*¹¹ like the mystic Jacob Bril, who left no trace of Spinoza studies in his work, was supposed to be a 'Spinozist' and met with severe hostility in Germany. This is no wonder if we keep in mind that the term 'Spinozism' was used in a wide sense in those days and was a synonym for 'pantheism', the latter term coined as late as 1709.¹² We know now that the pantheist tendencies in Bril's thought are to be derived from the mystical tradition. One can hardly distinguish them from the baroque mysticism of, for example, Angelus Silesius. From the superficial view of some of the apologists, however, these topics were close to or even identical with the essence of Spinoza's metaphysics. This alone would have been enough to attract their attention to Bril's writings, which in their view "give an idea of God, which is identical with Spinoza's" ("Gott [...] wird also beschrieben, wie Spinoza seinen Gott beschreibt"¹³). But what was worse was the success Bril's works had in the German book-trade. The Dutch collection of Bril's works—*De werken van den hoog-verlichten Jacob Bril* (Amsterdam, 1705)—was not translated into German *en bloc*. Instead, more than half a dozen books containing treatises by Bril were published until the 1730s,¹⁴ a success which could not but arouse concern.

¹¹ Cf. the chapter devoted to Bril in Leszek Kolakowski's *Chrétiens sans Eglise* (Paris, 1969), p. 694–704.

¹² But even historians in Van der Linde's time and after used it thus; cf. A. van der Linde, *Spinoza. Seine Lehre und deren erste Nachwirkungen in Holland* (Göttingen, 1862), p. 158–168; Jacob Freudenthal, "On The History of Spinozism", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 8 (1896), p. 46–48; J. Severijn, *Spinoza en de gereformeerde theologie zijner dagen* (Utrecht, 1919), p. 208–211.

¹³ Cf. Anon., "Jacob Brills [!] Wahre und falsche Erkenntniß Jesu Christi". *Unschuldige Nachrichten von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* (1712), p. 878–882.

¹⁴ Copies of the German translations of Bril's treatises are very rare. A. E. Wybrands, "Marinus Adriaansz. Booms. Eene bladzijde uit de geschiedenis der Spinozisterij in Nederland", *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kerkgeschiedenis* (1885), p. 51–128, mentions only the first two of the following list, p. 54: *Verschiedene Bijſhero in teutscher Sprache noch niemahlen gedruckte Tractätgen* (Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1730); *Erweckliche Bibel-Lust, oder Tieffsinnige und zur Erbauung dienliche Erklärungen vieler Schrift-Stellen* (Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1734); *Der Weg des Friedens, wie auch das freye Leben [...] in dreyen Tractätlein* (S.l., 1719); *Grünendes Kleeblatt aus J. Brills Schriften. Aufſs neue* (S.l., 1724); *Wahre und falsche Erkenntniß Jesu Christi* (Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1732); *Gründliche Anweisung zur Übung In der Selbst-Erkännntniß welche Jacob Brill ein Niederländer in seinem Glaubens-Bekännntniß Auf eine durchdringliche und nachdrückliche Weiße gethan* (S.l., 1725); *Ein Freyer Mensch im Geist [...] kürztlich angewiesen. Zweyter Druck* (S.l., 1725); *Erfreuliche Sterbens- und Todes-Gedanken. Nebst Dem beständigen Opfer. Nützlichen Zeitvertreiber und Buch des Geschlechts des Fleisches* (Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1723).

Pontiaan van Hattem's writings did not have the same fortune as Bril's treatises. No part of his collected works (*Den val van des werelds af-god*) has ever been published in German. But he was no less notorious east of the river Rhine.¹⁵ Numerous reports about the Zeeland heretic were published from the second decade of the 18th century. In 1728 a long list of Van Hattem's doctrines as condemned by Dutch synods was published.¹⁶ These accounts did not fail to alarm the German public, too. Many harsh polemics were written against "Spinoza and his Dutch followers, the so-called Hattemists" ("Spinozam [...] ejusque assecclas in Belgio, Hattemistae dicti"¹⁷). Theologians were troubled even more by Van Hattem than they were by Bril. First, because there seemed to be clear evidence that Van Hattem was indebted to Spinoza: according to a German scholar who had visited the Dutch provinces worst infected by Van Hattem, a copy of the *Opera Posthuma* with indubitable traces of intense reading was found under his pillow after his death ("exemplar undequaque lineis subductum"¹⁸). Second, Van Hattem had managed to gather a large group of partisans, among them Dina Jans,¹⁹ perhaps the only female Spinozist before Emilia Giancotti. Even the remotest nations were not safe against his influence. The German observers of the Dutch intellectual scenery were shocked by the news that Jacob Roggeveen, the editor of Van Hattem's works, had discovered Easter Island in the Pacific ocean.²⁰ The Netherlands, which had for long been distrusted as a "jungle of freethinkers" ("libertinorum

¹⁵ Cf. Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung*, p. 134–138.

¹⁶ Theodor Hase, "De nupera Schoristarum, & Hattemistarum in Belgio secta, ejusque auctoribus relatio", *Museum Historico-Philologico-Theologicum* (1729), p. 144–172. François Pluquet's account of Van Hattem's teachings, the main source available to French readers, depends entirely on Hase's information, cf. *Examen du fatalisme, ou exposition et refutation des différens Systèmes de Fatalisme* (Paris, 1757), vol. 1, p. 368–370.

¹⁷ Johann C. Klemm (Praes.) & Johann C. L. Esenbeck (Resp.), *Antithesis orthodoxa defensiva insultibus infidelium [...] in articulis de peccato [...] opposita* (Tübingen, 1742); Anon., "Von der Secte der Hebräer, und der Hattemisten in Holland", *Acta historico-ecclesiastica* (1736), p. 360–362; Anon., "Nachricht von den Hattemisten in Holland", *Fortgesetzte Sammlung von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* (1738), p. 791–795.

¹⁸ Hase, *De Hattemistis*, p. 154.

¹⁹ Cf. Wybrands, "Marinus Adriaansz. Booms", p. 107.

²⁰ Cf. J. Borsius, "Mededeeling van eenige nog onbekende byzonderheden aangaande Mr. Jacob Roggeveen", *Nieuw Nederlandsch archief voor kerkelyke geschiedenis* 1 (1841), p. 267–362.

Africa”²¹), now sent its missionaries to the new world to spread Spinozism there—a horrifying scenario, indeed. Third, Van Hattem had selected the most pernicious doctrines from Spinoza’s system and had managed to transform them into teachings accessible even to illiterate persons. And what was worse, Van Hattem—“mirus dissimulandi artifex”²²—had preached Spinozism disguised as a kind of Protestant theology,²³ “met Schriftuurlyke spreekwyzen omhangen”²⁴ as Nieuwentijt complained. Spinoza’s determinism and rejection of the traditional concept of sin was offered to his readers as if it were Saint Paul writing to the Romans: No human action is sinful (“Hominis peccatum non situm est in ejus actionibus”). Everything that happens is in accordance with God’s will: “nihil fieri praeter voluntatem Dei”. Man’s actions are never sinful, because they are in fact God’s actions (“omnes actiones nostras esse actiones Dei”). So, there is no reason to believe that God will punish man for his sins: “Deum nunquam punire hominem propter peccatum”.²⁵

Perhaps the reports about Van Hattem available in Germany, like Spandaw’s *De bedekte Spinozist ontdekt in de persoon van Pontiaan van Hattem* (Goes, 1700),²⁶ exaggerated his debt to Spinoza. It is not my task here to examine whether in Van Hattem’s case the charge of Spinozism was grounded or not.²⁷ What Kolakowski said about Bril may be true concerning Van Hattem, too: “on peut [...] expliquer parfaitement les sources de sa mystique [...] sans se référer à Spinoza”.²⁸ What seemed to be a popularization of Spinoza’s determinism

²¹ Budde, *Theses theologiae de atheismo*, p. 178 ff.

²² Hase, “De nupera Schoristarum secta”, p. 156.

²³ Anon., *Nachricht von den Hattemisten*, p. 793 ff.: “...van Hattem soll den von Spinoza gebrauchten Methodum Mathematicam vor schwer und verdrießlich gehalten haben, und demnach dessen Systema nach einer populären Methode und mit Biblischen Terminis angenehm machen”.

²⁴ Bernhard Nieuwentijt, *Gronden van Zekerheid [...] Ter Wederlegging van Spinozas Denkbeldig Samenstel* (Amsterdam, 1728; 2nd ed.), p. 385.

²⁵ Hase, “De nupera Schoristarum”, p. 159-161.

²⁶ Cf. Anon., “Von der Secte der Hebräer”.

²⁷ Cf. Michiel Wielema’s contribution to this volume; Angela Roothaan, “Pontiaan van Hattem, een vroege criticus van Spinoza”, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 50 (1988), p. 525-535 and “Pontiaan van Hattem: critique ou hérétique?”, *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), p. 213-227.

²⁸ Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans Eglise*, p. 695. G.C. van Niftrik showed that there is a close relation between Hattemism and the quietism of Molinos: *Spinoza en de sectariërs van zijn tijd* (Leiden, 1962), p. 5 ff.

²⁹ C. E. Weismann (Praes.) & Johann H. Scholderer et al. (Resp.), *Horrenda insania docendi [...] inter Deum et hominem non dari peccatum* (Tübingen, 1746).

and immoralism²⁹ was perhaps nothing but a kind of religious anti-nomianism,³⁰ inspired rather by the quietism of Molinos³¹ than the *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*. For 18th-century readers, however, there was no doubt that Van Hattem was inspired by Spinoza.³²

What is open to doubt concerning Van Hattem is a matter of fact concerning Frederik van Leenhof.³³ He himself openly confessed that he had studied Spinoza's works attentively: "ik zeg rond uit, dat ik dien wijsgeer aandachtig gelezen hebbe".³⁴ Although Van Leenhof is reluctant towards philosophical speculation ("bespiegeling", p. 99) and wishes rather to give practical advice to everybody ("alle slag van menschen", p. 127), his practical philosophy rests upon the essential topics of Spinoza's metaphysics. Man's actions are determined by the unviolable laws of nature ("wetten der nature", p. 19). As these laws are in fact "God's eternal order" ("Gods eeuwige ordre", p. 19), we must not oppose to them nor repent anything we have done. There is no sin ("de sonde is [...] een non-ens", p. 90). Repentance is a complaint against God ("murmureeringe tegen God", p. 80). Instead, we should regard all our actions as according to the laws of nature. In order to live a good life, we needn't repent what we think we have done wrong and we needn't fear to be punished in a future life. We only need to aspire to what Spinoza had called *laetitia*, *blijdschap*. "*Laetitia est hominis transitio a minore ad majorem perfectionem*".³⁵ This is the core of Van Leenhof's doctrine, too. Like Spinoza's *Ethica*, Van Leenhof's popular ethics promises *laetitia* as a reward, but dismisses the traditional ethical ideas of punishment, repentance and sin.

A doctrine like this could not fail to attract the attention of philosophers and theologians abroad, where van Leenhof was soon sup-

³⁰ Cf. J. van Leeuwen, "De antinomianen, of de secten der Verschoristen, of Hebreëen, Hattemisten en aanverwante Buitendijkers", *Nederlandsch archief voor kerkelijke geschiedenis* 8 (1848), p. 57-169, esp. p. 87-137; J. Hulsius, *De hedendaegsche antinomianerie, met die der Engelsche wetbestryders vergeleken* (Middelburg, 1696).

³¹ This is suggested, e.g., by Van Niftrik, *Spinoza en de sectariërs van zijn tijd*, p. 5 ff.

³² Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol IV-2, p. 702.

³³ Frederik van Leenhof, *Den hemel op aarden; Of een korte en klare Beschrijvinge Van de Waare en Stantvastige blydschap* (Zwolle, 1703). The quotations given above refer to this edition. For further bio-bibliographical information, cf. Hubert Vandenbossche, *Frederik van Leenhof* (Bruxelles, 1974).

³⁴ Frederik van Leenhof, *Den hemel op aarden opgeheldert van Nevelen en Misverstand, en Vooroordeelen* (Zwolle, 1704), p. 61.

posed to be one of the leading figures of the “Spinozismus post Spinozam”.³⁶ Gottlob Friedrich Jenichen’s voluminous *Historia Spinozismi Leenhofiani publica in Belgio auctoritate novissime damnati ex authenticis documentis collecta* (Leipzig, 1707), one of the few books devoted entirely to one of the early Dutch Spinozists abroad, is still a valuable source book for the Zwolle heretic. The Leenhof-controversies were attentively observed.³⁷ Van Leenhof’s main work was translated into German for the first time only three years after its original edition.

Der Himmel auff Erden / Eine Kurze und Klahre Beschreibung der wahren und Beständigen Freude / So wol nach der Vernunft / als der H. Schrift / für allerley Ahrt Leuten in allerley Vorfällen durch Fredericus von Leenhof, Prediger zu Zwolle: Wobey ein Sendschreiben gefüget ist / was von diesem Werk zu halten. Amsterdam / im verlag von Jacob von Wesel / 1706.³⁸

It was not an academic and philosophical readership that was envisaged by the translator. A book—remember, a *vernacular* book—entitled “Heaven on Earth” was capable of attracting the attention of persons who could read but had not studied at a university,³⁹ who used to read pious, religious texts which often had similar titles and a similarly edifying, non-scholarly make-up. The translation of *Den hemel op aarden* in which there is no indication of the author’s indebtedness to Spinoza, helped to disseminate his ideas among readers who were unaware of the fact that they were infected with Spinoza’s

³⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics* III, def. aff. 2; cf. Van Leenhof, *Den hemel op aarden*, p. 19 ff.: “De waare Blijdschap is niet anders als een overgank tot meerder volmaaktheid.”

³⁶ Cf. Staalkopff & Grammann, *De Spinozismo post Spinozam*, p. 8 ff., Reimmann, *Historia universalis atheismi*, p. 484 ff. [p. 565 ff.]; Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. IV-2, p. 697–699; Trinius, *Freydenker-Lexicon*, p. 335–339; François Pluquet, *Examen du fatalisme, ou exposition et refutation des différens Systèmes de Fatalisme* (Paris, 1757), vol. 1, p. 365–368.

³⁷ Anon., “Register der pro und contra Leenhofium ausgekommenen Schrifften”, *Fortgesetzte Sammlung von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen* (1723), p. 575–580; Walch, *Historische und Theologische Einleitung*, vol. 2, p. 903–924.

³⁸ To the 212-page translation an appendix (*Ein Sendschreiben über des Herren Leenhofs Tractat vom Himmel auff Erden*, p. 1–22) is added in which the anonymous editor discusses the theological problems arising from Van Leenhof’s rejection of repentance, sin and punishment. No indication at all is given about Van Leenhof’s indebtedness to Spinoza and the Dutch controversies about it.

³⁹ It was, however, read by scholarly readers, too; cf. Jakob Friedrich Reimmann, *Catalogus bibliothecae theologiae, systematico-criticus, In quo, Libri Theologici, In Bibliotheca Reimmanniana extantes, Editi & inediti [...] enumerantur* (Hildesheim, 1731), p. 1059; Lange, *Caussa Dei*, p. 123; Jahn, *Verzeichnis*, p. 1977 ff.; Gottlieb Stolle, *Kurtze Nachricht von den Büchern und deren Urhebern in der Stollischen Bibliothec*, part 17 (Jena, 1743), p. 6; Zacharias Grape, *Systema novissimarum controversiarum* (Rostock-Neubrandenburg, 1738), p. 53.

ideas or who even had no idea that west of the river Rhine there had been a philosopher named Spinoza.

In referring to the translations of *Den hemel op aarden* and other Spinozistic texts I have passed the boundaries of the history of philosophy in the usual, narrow sense. Strictly speaking, one must admit that these texts were not the media of a *philosophical* Spinoza-reception. They were rather suited to creating some kind of 'popular heterodoxy', a non-conformist religious *Weltanschauung*. This popular heterodoxy included some of Spinoza's basic ideas (the rejection of the concept of sin, repentance and punishment), deliberately disguised by Van Leenhof with a theological manner of speaking, and unrecognized by most of his ordinary readers.

The Germans' interest in the writings of the Dutch Spinozists was vivid, indeed: there were readers who were not content with one volume of Bril's writings, but bought six or more of them, and the German version of Van Leenhof's *Den hemel op aarden* obviously sold so well that it had to be reprinted.⁴⁰ Some readers of Leenhof's *Den hemel op aarden* were so fascinated by that book that they even travelled to Zwolle to visit its author who lived there.⁴¹ Some of them appreciated Van Leenhof's teachings because they were misled by the theological disguise of Leenhof's Spinozism and were not aware that they were reading a book containing several basic ideas of Spinoza's. In the mid-eighteenth century a German theologian proved good-will as well as ignorance when he defended Van Leenhof against the accusation of Spinozism.⁴² Even adversaries of

⁴⁰ In the mid-eighteenth century the *Hemel op aarden* was translated for a second time; cf. *Der Himmel auf Erden* (Leipzig, 1758); cf. Wilhelm Heinsius, *Allgemeines Bücher-Lexikon*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1812), col. 759.

⁴¹ Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, *Merkwürdige Reisen durch Niedersachsen Holland und Engelland* vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main-Leipzig, 1753), p. 368–371; Uffenbach visited Van Leenhof in May 1710.

⁴² Johann B. Lüderwald, *Abhandlungen zur richtigen Beurtheilung der Religion* (Wolfenbüttel, 1749), p. 110–116. Simon Tyssot de Patot, too, said "que ses [Leenhof's] maximes sont fondées pour la plupart sur des passages [...] du vieux & du nouveau Testament"; *Lettres choisies*, vol. 2 (The Hague, 1727), p. 221, but one should doubt whether he honestly believed that, since he was too well informed about Spinoza's philosophy; cf. Aubrey Rosenberg, *Tyssot de Patot and His Work* (The Hague, 1972), *passim*. Even in the late 19th century the obvious borrowings from Spinoza's philosophy were overlooked by Heinrich Heppe: *Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der reformierten Kirche, namentlich der Niederlande* (Leiden, 1879), p. 381–83. He understood Leenhof's theology as "a mysticism resembling pantheist views", p. 383: ("Charakter einer an pantheistische Anschauungen erinnernden Mystik"). Heppe also denied any Spinozan influence on Deurhoff, p. 379 ff., and Van Hattem, p. 376–79.

Van Leenhof like Johann Franz Budde, one of the foremost *defensores fidei* of that time, overlooked the Spinozistic substance in Van Leenhof's treatise when he first read it.⁴³

In the early 1740s, the free-thinker Johann Christian Edelmann,⁴⁴ who at the beginning of his intellectual development was a severe critic of orthodox theology, but still a Christian, became acquainted with Van Hattem's thought.⁴⁵ A young thinker who was loosening his ties with Christian thought could indeed find some inspiration in Van Hattem and could be led towards Spinozism. Edelmann never was a Spinozist in a strict sense—he did not engage in professional philosophy—but he eventually became a defender of Spinoza against the orthodox polemics and adopted some of his doctrines which he transformed into a popular pantheism.⁴⁶

Apart from this popular heterodoxy stimulated by Spinoza's Dutch disciples, there is another point which is of historical significance. The awareness of the fact that there were numerous groups of Spinozists in the Netherlands who were producing a great deal of pantheistic and immoralistic texts added considerably to the Germans' hostility to Spinoza, and understandably so. If Spinoza had not had his Dutch disciples, his philosophy would have remained a threat to academic philosophy and theology⁴⁷ alone—and a threat which could easily be overcome. There were, of course, a few Spinozistic freethinkers like Stosch and Wachter,⁴⁸ and there were

⁴³ Cf. Johann Franz Budde's *Temperamentum laetitiae ac tristitiae contra Fredericum van Leenhoff* of 1708 (republished in his *Meditationes sacrae* (Jena, 1719), p. 26–33). Budde's article is, no wonder, highly critical of van Leenhof's rejection of repentance. But only some years later did he become aware of the sources which inspired the Zwolle heretic; cf. Budde, *Theses theologicae de atheismo*, p. 178, where Van Leenhof ranks among the most prominent Spinozists of those days.

⁴⁴ Cf. Walter Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann. From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment* (The Hague-Paris, 1976).

⁴⁵ Johann Christian Edelmann, *Unschuldige Wahrheiten* (1743), in: *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Walter Grossmann (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1969), vol. 6, p. 316–368.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rüdiger Otto's contribution to this volume.

⁴⁷ Cf. Walter Sparr, "Formalis Atheus? Die Krise der protestantischen Orthodoxie, gespiegelt in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit Spinoza", in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. Gründer & Schmidt-Biggemann, p. 27–63.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch, *Concordia rationis et fidei. Dokumente*, ed. W. Schröder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1992); Johann Georg Wachter, *Der Spinozismus Im Judenthumb oder die von dem heütigen Judenthumb und dessen Geheimen Kabbala Vergötterte Welt. An Mose Germano sonsten Johann Peter Speeth [...] befunden und widerleget* (Amsterdam, 1699), ed. W. Schröder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1994); cf. Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung*, p. 32–58; 59–123.

some anonymous clandestine authors⁴⁹ who deserved attention and refutation. Spinozism was often—and not without reason—called “une extravagance philosophique”, “une métaphysique bizarre” which could only attract a minority of *enfants terribles* outside the academic sphere. Theologians could be sure that outside this tiny group of partisans of Spinoza the *TTP* and *Ethics* could not expect a broader reception. From the first decade of the 18th century onwards, however, the German theological apologists learned that “the Dutch were following Spinoza as their intellectual leader in troops” (“Spinozam armenta tota in Belgio sequi ducem”). This diagnosis and especially Hermann Alexander Röell’s dramatic wording,⁵⁰ became a *Leitmotiv* in the German discussions of Spinoza. The writings of Van Hattem, Van Leenhof, Bril and others were understood as illustrations of this diagnosis and signals of alarm in several respects.

First, they proved that, in spite of the elaborate academic method, the “sècheresse mathématique”⁵¹ of the authentic system of the *Ethics*, Spinozism was capable of popularization. Even laymen, like the audience of Van Hattem, could be seduced by a Spinozism made easy. Whereas the entire system of the *Ethics* was accessible to professional philosophers only, some of its most dangerous doctrines could be propagated among unprofessional, non-philosophical readers: the rejection of the orthodox concept of liberty and responsibility, of sin and virtue, the rejection of the necessity of repentance.

Second, Spinoza’s doctrines were apt to be preached from the pulpit. They could be combined with—or disguised by—religious ideas.

⁴⁹ The most important Spinozistic clandestine text written by a German is the anonymous *Symbolum sapientiae* or *Cymbalum mundi*. It is still unpublished, and research has only recently commenced; cf. Guido Canziani, “Critica della religione e fonti moderne nel ‘Cymbalum mundi’ o ‘Symbolum sapientiae’”, in: *Filosofia e religione nella letteratura clandestina secoli XVII e XVIII*, ed. G. Canziani (Milan, 1994), p. 35–81; W. Schröder, “Das ‘Symbolum sapientiae’ / ‘Cymbalum mundi’ und der Tractatus theologico-politicus”, *Studia Spinozana* 7 (1991), p. 227–239; W. Schröder, “Spinoza im Untergrund. Zur Rezeption seines Werks in der littérature clandestine”, *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Delf *et al.*, p. 142–161.

⁵⁰ Cf. Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. IV-2, p. 697, quoting Hermann Alexander Röell, *Dissertatio de religione rationali* (Utrecht, 1713; 6th ed.), §151, p. 166: “Utinam inauditum esset in Belgica nostra execrabile illud Spinosae nomen, quem tota armenta sequuntur ducem!”

⁵¹ Henri de Boulainviller, *Essai de métaphysique dans les principes de B... de Sp...*, in: *Oeuvres philosophiques*, ed. Renée Simon (The Hague, 1973–1975), 2 vols., I, p. 155.

Spinoza, thus, was not an enemy *ante portas*, but was able to influence theologians, as he had already done in the Netherlands. So, Spinoza was a threat not only to academic theologians and philosophers, but also to those who cared about the right faith of the ordinary people.

Third, there were in particular some currents of Christian thought which were particularly susceptible to the Spinozistic virus. Like the Dutch *chrétiens sans Eglise* described by Kolakowski, in Germany, too, there were independent, pietist theologians, adherents of Jacob Böhme⁵² and, of course, mystics of all kinds who had only to take a few steps to become Spinozists.⁵³

To sum up: on the one hand, in the academic and, more specifically, the philosophical sphere, the major effect of the circulation of the Dutch Spinozistic treatises in Germany was not favourable to the dissemination of Spinoza's thought. On the contrary, these texts caused a severe worsening of the anti-Spinoza climate which had been bad enough before. They rather hindered than promoted the philosophical Spinoza-reception in Germany.

While in the academic sphere the response to the Dutch Spinozists was vivid but hostile, on the part of the non-academic reader-

⁵² Böhme and especially the suspicion that Behmenism is a fertile soil for Spinozism is omnipresent, e. g. in a significant early 'Spinoza controversy' staged in Amsterdam in 1698. In this debate the converted Jew Johann Peter Spaeth, an ardent admirer of Böhme, was accused by his counterpart Johann Georg Wachter of unconsciously sharing Spinoza's 'pantheism'; cf. Wachter, *Der Spinozismus Im Judenthumb*, p. 10, 116, 250, 274 ff. and p. 402, 409 ff. [commentary]. The suspicion against Böhme was, of course, prompted by Henry More (cf. e. g. his *Ad. V. C. Epistola altera, Quae brevem Tractatus theologico-politici confutationem Complectitur [...]*, in: *Opera omnia* (London, 1679) vol. 2-1, esp. p. 619, and his *Philosophiae Teutonicae censura*, *ibid.*, p. 529-651); cf. also Gustav Herwech, *Tractatus quo atheismum fanaticismi sivi Bömii [sic] naturalismum et Spinozismum [...] detegit, & ex tenebris in lucem protrahit* (Leipzig-Wismar, 1709). For the Dutch scenery, cf. Michael John Petry, "Behmenism and Spinozism in the Religious Culture of the Netherlands, 1660-1730", *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. Gründer & Schmidt-Biggemann, p. 111-147.

⁵³ Tyssot de Patot gave an illuminating description of the difficulty in precisely marking the frontiers between Spinozism and some Calvinist teachings, when he commented on the Leenhof-debate: "Il [sc. Van Leenhof] soutient que tout ce qui arrive dans le monde, & que l'on distingue par les termes de bien, de mal, de vertu, de vice &c. part de lui nécessairement; & qu'ainsi il ne doit y avoir, ni résurrection, ni jugement, ni salut, ni damnation, ni rien de ce que l'Ecriture nous fait craindre ou espérer après cette vie. Cela n'est pas recevable, on ne sauroit le nier. Cependant tout pernicieux qu'il paroît, il ne laisse pas, au sentiment de plusieurs personnes de bon sens, de favoriser les Protestans, à l'égard de la prédestination", *Lettres choisies*, vol. 2, p. 222 ff.

ship it was (although unprofessional) no less vivid. Regarding the elitist make-up of Spinoza's philosophy, this popular reception, mediated by the Dutch Spinozists, displays an amazing phenomenon indeed. Taking up the motto of this conference, I would suggest that besides the disguised and overt Spinozism, there was a third type of reception. Unlike the crypto-Spinozists who *decided* to hide their convictions, there were persons who entertained Spinozistic views but were unaware of being Spinozists, persons who had acquired some ideas from an edifying book entitled *Heaven on Earth* without recognizing that they had adopted ideas originating from one of the most pernicious books of the era, the *Opera Posthuma*. The number of these unaware / unconscious Spinozists perhaps even surpassed the number of those who deliberately adopted Spinoza's teachings. Apart from exceptions like the young Edelmann, the way in which Spinoza's philosophy was transformed in the minds of these unprofessional readers of the Dutch Spinozistic treatises will remain forever unknown. It may well have been the case, however, that in Germany as in the Netherlands "Spinozam tota armenta sequi ducem".

JOHANN CHRISTIAN EDELMANN'S CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE AND ITS RELATION TO SPINOZA

Rüdiger Otto

Johann Christian Edelmann¹ was long considered one of the most significant Spinozists in Germany; he is still referred to as such today.² This reputation was created in the course of the intellectual battles during Edelmann's lifetime and is founded on some of his opinions and proclamations. Negating at an early stage the personalistic and extramundane view of God and the concept of a Trinitarian God, he proclaimed the presence of God in human beings and, to a certain degree, in nature. For this reason he defended Spinoza's notion of 'causa immanens'. This does not mean, however, that he was influenced by Spinoza's philosophy of God: his position was already heterodox when he became acquainted with Spinoza's pantheism, and from this position he was able to affirm Spinoza's notions against the common opinion of his contemporaries. Despite this rejection of personalism which unites Spinoza and Edelmann in their opposition to traditional thinking, scholars no longer describe Edelmann as a Spinozist—there are a number of Neoplatonic and vitalist notions in Edelmann's concept of God which are foreign to Spinoza's philosophy. But regarding Edel-

¹ The basic authority on Edelmann is Walter Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann. From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment* (The Hague-Paris, 1976). Grossmann is also the editor of Johann Christian Edelmann, *Sämtliche Schriften in Einzelausgaben* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, 1967-1987), 12 vols. This edition mainly contains well-introduced reprints of first editions of Edelmann's books which have never been re-edited; some texts are published from manuscript for the first time, e.g. the second part of *Moses mit aufgedeckten Angesicht* (vol. VII, 2).

² Cf. e.g. Horst Möller, *Vernunft und Kritik. Deutsche Aufklärung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), p. 78; Siegfried Raeder, "Bibelwerke", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 6 (1980), p. 312; Stefan Winkle, *Die heimlichen Spinozisten in Altona und der Spinozastreit* (Hamburg, 1988), p. 35-45, 110-114. As to research and to older literature, cf. Winfried Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* (Würzburg, 1987), p. 25-27. Cf. also Rüdiger Otto, *Studien zur Spinozarezeption in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), p. 105-110.

mann's criticism of the Bible, there is agreement in the secondary literature that he was deeply influenced by Spinoza.³

There is no doubt regarding the dependence of Edelmann on Spinoza in this field and Edelmann himself has confessed that it was due to Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that he no longer considered the Bible to be a sacrosanct book. Only after reading the *Tractatus* were his eyes opened about the real character of Scripture. "I went over and over again what I read with him (Spinoza's *TTP*), [...] used my own reason, asked the advice of other authors who had written either in favour of or against the reputation of the Bible. The more I searched the more I found what an ill ground it was on which this awful idol stood".⁴ A short time after his acquaintance with the *TTP*, he published *Moses mit aufgedecktem Angesicht*; of Edelmann's books, this is the one which provoked the most considerable apologetic efforts and the harshest reaction of the State because of its attacks against the Bible and against institutionalized religion. Edelmann's own testimony and the obvious connection between reading the *TTP* and publishing *Moses* lead to the conviction that Edelmann is the immediate heir to Spinoza's criticism of the Bible and that this is one of the rare areas where we can see an obvious influence of Spinoza on a representative of the German enlightenment. On this basis, we have to ask whether there is any conformity in method, development of themes, critical results and so on.

But it does not seem sufficient only to investigate *Moses* with regard to its criticism of the Bible and its relation to Spinoza. In order to understand Edelmann, one has to look at his lifetime and at his convictions prior to his critical period. When he read the *TTP* Edelmann was already about 40 years old; his style of thinking and writing, his interests and mental direction were to a large extent developed, so that we have to expect that he read the *TTP* selectively. The following pages try to describe Edelmann's development with regard to his understanding of the Bible and from the point of view of his own circumstances. Whether there are similarities to Spinoza is something one can find out only after this examination.

³ Cf. Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung*, p. 27; Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des europäischen Denkens*, vol. 2 (Münster, 1984), p. 412; David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (London, 1984), p. 19; Grossmann, introduction in Edelmann, *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. VII, 1, p. vi-xii, xx.

⁴ Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, in: *Sämtliche Schriften* XII, p. 350.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The initial impulse for his distanced view of his own tradition came from his practical experiences and doubts on some points of the orthodox dogmatic system. Being himself in search of a holy way of life, he observed that the ministers of religion he met did not try to harmonize Gospel teachings and life. Reading Gottfried Arnold's famous *Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, Edelmann began to understand the difference between practice and theory as being a general defect of institutionalized religion.⁵ Arnold's attacks against superficial Christianity and his concept of a spiritual church are also to be found as themes in Edelmann's early publications. In 1735 he began to publish the so-called *Unschuldige Wahrheiten* (Innocent truths).⁶

Interesting for our subject is the use of the Bible in this context. Edelmann's distance from the dogmatic positions of Lutheran orthodoxy in this period was based on the Bible. "The more I observed from the permanent contradictions of the most famous teachers of my sect that there was nothing reliable in their words, the more I used the Bible, which at this time was still my only rule and guideline".⁷ Edelmann already accepted at this time that there was divine revelation outside the text of the Bible; this acceptance, however, was grounded in the Bible itself, namely in the text of Rom. I:19 ff. and on the report of the pre-Mosaic period, when the people lived without Holy Scripture but within a vivid experience of God. Edelmann believed that modern Christians, however, had to find their salvation in the Bible alone. When, for instance, he pleads against orthodox dogma for the concept that the reborn are without sin, he refers especially to exegetical reasons. In his first epistle (1 John 3:9), John states that a child of God does not commit sin. Paul's claim to be a sinner or his warning of the danger of sin for Christians cannot weaken the validity of John's proclamation. Edelmann tried to explain the difference by introducing the concept of a graduation between the presence of Christ in humankind on the one hand and rebirth on the other. It was indeed important for him to have an exegetical basis for his conviction and to ensure the conformity of apparently different statements in Scripture. "Why should we any

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁶ Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 61-85.

⁷ Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 131.

longer bear contradictory scriptures? Is it worthwhile for a man with sound mind to consider it? Can we consider to be divine scriptures which are contradictory? This need not be the case and to say so indicates a prejudice, an affection or an intended obstinacy".⁸ Edelmann has also detected the reason for the exegesis of orthodoxy. Instead of following the text of the Bible, orthodox theologians interpret it in the light of their presuppositions and dogmas. Edelmann's persistence in the conformity of the whole text, however, shows the weakness of his biblical basis, as each divergence, once discovered, destroys the credibility of the Bible as a whole.

By the time of the publication of *Unschuldige Wahrheiten* at the latest, Edelmann knew that he would not make a career as a churchman. After brief connections with Count Zinzendorf and his community, he went to Berleburg in order to work as a translator on a new edition of the Bible characterized by extensive pietistic or mystical commentaries.⁹ In Berleburg, Edelmann became acquainted with the 'Community of the Inspired',¹⁰ which had established itself nearby. This acquaintance was of serious consequence for him. Edelmann was impressed by the simplicity and goodness of this Christian community, thinking he had found in this group his ideal of Christian living. He participated in their worship but did not become a full member of the community. This mental reservation led to a conflict with the Inspired and their prophet Johann Friedrich Rock, who during his prophetic utterances claimed to be the voice of God. At this time, Edelmann also believed in 'inspiration', the concept of direct supranatural communication with God. That is why he could not be indifferent. Either he acknowledged the authority of Rock or doubted it in principle: "According to my ideas at that time, the spirit which was speaking through Rock was either God himself or the devil".¹¹ This conflict explains Edelmann's severe spiritual crisis before meeting Rock,¹² but also his euphoria in view

⁸ Edelmann, *Unschuldige Wahrheiten* 7, in: *Sämtliche Schriften* II, p. 545.

⁹ Cf. Raeder, "Bibelwerke", p. 312 ff.; Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 97; on translators and commentators, among others Edelmann, cf. Josef Urlinger, *Die geistes- und sprachgeschichtliche Bedeutung der Berleburger Bibel. Ein Beitrag zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Quietismus in Deutschland* (Saarbrücken, 1969), p. 29-33, on attacks against Spinoza within the commentaries of this Bible edition p. 54.

¹⁰ Cf. Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 98-104.

¹¹ Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 273.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 272-274; Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 264.

of the event which liberated him from the crisis. One night Edelmann awoke "and in this moment the words from St. John 'Theos en ho logos' came to my mind in such a vivid way that I believed someone would speak in praesenti to me and would say with an unspeakable force: God is reason".¹³ This auditory experience made a deep impression not only at the moment when it occurred, but became the foundation of his further religious development. Its next effect was a series of texts which was published under the title *The Divinity of Reason*, not until 1742, but written before *Moses*, i.e. before Edelmann read the *TTP*.¹⁴

DIE GÖTTLICHKEIT DER VERNUNFT

The basic idea of this book rests on the intuitive reinterpretation of the Logos concept in St. John's Gospel.¹⁵ On this basis Edelmann investigates the use of the Logos concept in early Christian philosophy. He quotes Justin the Martyr,¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria,¹⁷ Origen¹⁸ and others in order to demonstrate that the early Christians had identified God and reason. Edelmann refers to the Apologists and Alexandrine theologians who defended Christianity against pagan philosophers with the help of the Logos notion. They understood Logos as the reason which rules all humans, including pre- and non-Christians, and which finds its perfect revelation in Christ. This mediation of particularism and universalism was intended to demonstrate the dignity and validity of Christian truth¹⁹ and pursues an apologetical aim. Surprisingly, Edelmann revives this

¹³ Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 274.

¹⁴ This book contains the explanation of the text of St. John, four letters, some quite long, written between 1738 and 1740, and an appendix in which Edelmann, in a defense of John Locke, once again comments on his own understanding of the reasonableness of Christianity. Edelmann himself stressed that this book originated before *Moses* (Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 340 ff.). The basic text was obviously not changed, for Edelmann occasionally annotated his earlier opinions, writing that he meanwhile no longer thought so, but did not alter the text. Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 217, ann.

¹⁵ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 265, 59 ff., 337 ff.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92 ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45, 141 ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159 ff.

¹⁹ Bengt Hägglund, *Geschichte der Theologie* (Berlin, 1983), p. 22, 46-52; Eric Osborn, *Anfänge christlichen Denkens* (Leipzig, 1986), p. 110 ff., p. 314 ff.

theory in a new context.²⁰ Not until the third century or later²¹ was the understanding of the concept of Logos as 'ratio' substituted by 'verbum', 'word'—at the same time as the development of the dogmatic theories of the Trinity and the growing sway of the episcopate over Christians through the suppression of reason.²²

Edelmann is heir to the spiritualist theory of the original purity and later decay of Christianity, but in his view early Christianity was not characterized by simplicity and absence of speculation, ceremonies and dogmatic principles,²³ but first of all by the understanding of the reasonableness of God. He thus saw himself as a reformer who uncovers the better origins and helps overwhelm the evil by showing the reasons for the decay. Besides the historical and eclectic explanation,²⁴ Edelmann intended to demonstrate by means of convincing argumentation that reason as an expression of both God and the human faculty of knowledge of God is better than faith alone. Terms like independence,²⁵ eternity²⁶ or conscience²⁷ helped him to demonstrate that the word 'Logos' as a predicate of God should not be translated by 'word' but only by 'reason'. Edelmann's aim was not a purely theoretical one: by means of the concept of reason, which characterizes the essence of God and of human beings,²⁸ he strove to express the original feeling of nearness to God experi-

²⁰ He also cites the preface of Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* (Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 167) in which 'logos' is translated by 'reason' with reference to Erasmus of Rotterdam, cf. Benedicti de Spinoza *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Carolus Hermannus Bruder (Lipsiae, 1843), I, p. 158. Edelmann, however, rejects the identification of 'ratio' and 'intellectus' which he considers quite different (Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 284 ff.). Like John Locke Edelmann pleads against innate ideas and considers the intellect to be a blank sheet of paper. (Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 434 ff.)

²¹ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 62, 247.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 26 ff.

²³ Cf. Erich Seeberg, "Christian Thomasius and Gottfried Arnold", *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 31 (1920), p. 337-358, 350.

²⁴ It is possible that Edelmann was influenced in this point by his teacher Johann Franz Budde, who preferred the eclectic method in theology and philosophy, cf. Walter Sparr, "Auf dem Wege zur theologischen Aufklärung in Halle. Von Johann Franz Budde zu Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten", *Zentren der Aufklärung I. Halle; Aufklärung und Pietismus*, ed. Norbert Hinske (Heidelberg, 1989), p. 71-89; Lucien Braun, *Geschichte der Philosophiegeschichte* (Darmstadt, 1990), p. 103-109.

²⁵ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 37.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35 ff., 56 ff., 68, 191.

enced when he came upon the new translation of 'Logos'.²⁹

This kind of experience has a structural similarity to experience in the mystical or spiritualist tradition. In the face of this tradition, Edelmann wanted to show that the presence of God is a constant characteristic of natural man. When man is called an 'animal rationale', Edelmann says that the 'differentia specifica' distinguishing man from other animals is reason, and he sees the fact that nobody wants to be without reason³⁰ as evidence that basic reason is always present, and that only religious indoctrination has hindered man from understanding this reason as being the presence of God.

The spiritualistic touch of this concept of reason can be seen in Edelmann's remark that the classical notions of spiritualism as 'inner word'³¹ and 'Christ in us' are appropriate to express the concept of the presence of God but notwithstanding not quite the right words insofar as this presence cannot be harmonized with the well-known faculties of the soul. This is why he proposed to use the word 'reason'.³² He rejected the difference between dark and enlightened, corrupt and sound reason, and so on.³³ Reason is eo ipso the human faculty for representing the Divine. However, the extent to which it is connected with spiritualism can be seen in his exclusion of certain meanings of reason. When the pious say that reason is dangerous as the organ of self-assertion and of relationship to the world, and for this reason an obstacle on the way to God, Edelmann answers that this is not reason but sensual fantasy.³⁴ In the same way, Edelmann corrects what Abraham von Franckenberg supposed in *Warnung für den Betrug der menschlichen Vernunft in geistlichen Sachen*³⁵ when he dif-

²⁹ As to the notion of experience, see Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 34 ff., 100. In the context of his polemic against the orthodox idea of faith, Edelmann explains his own understanding which corresponds to the certainty of reason. See Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 146, 221, 445 "...it is a gift of God [...] He gives it to whom he wishes [...] It does not consist of these or those sentences or opinions but it is an inner conviction of the truth which is God himself and He has neither articles nor words of which He consists but He reveals Himself to everyone according to his comprehension without any constraint." Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 448.

³⁰ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 114, 178, 520 ff.

³¹ Cf. Wilhelm Bender, *Johann Conrad Dippel. Der Freigeist aus dem Pietismus; ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Aufklärung* (Bonn, 1882), p. 132-142; Berndt Hamm, "Johann Arndts Wortverständnis", *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 8 (1982), p. 43-73, here p. 48-55.

³² Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 238.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 68, 106.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78-83, 231.

³⁵ As to Franckenberg, cf. Siegfried Wollgast, *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen*

ferentiated enlightened and true reason, which is revealed by Christ, on the one hand, and traditional Aristotelianism, which is not enlightened, on the other. Edelmann rejects the idea of differences within the concept of reason, attributing the concept of enlightened reason to reason in general and replacing the words "not reborn reason" by "fantasy of the flesh".³⁶ It seems that this identification of reason and experience of God is also what led Edelmann to his rejection of Christian Wolff's philosophy.³⁷ Insofar as reason is the principle of knowledge in Wolff's philosophy, Edelmann affirms it. But, in his opinion, this philosophy is not able to satisfy—probably what he missed here was 'spiritual food'.³⁸

Reason receives its effusive joy exclusively from the experience of God.³⁹ But the precondition for this experience is renunciation of natural, world-related activities. Edelmann warns his readers: "Without real and un hypocritical hatred of one's own life, one should not expect any vivid conviction of the divinity of one's reason".⁴⁰ As long as the conditions of existence in the world remain, as long as man is imprisoned in the "body of this death",⁴¹ his knowledge of God is reduced. Edelmann's notion of reason is characterized by an ambiguity. Regarding the content, it has an affinity to the 'inner word' or 'inner man' by which the spiritualistic tradition explained the inner presence of the divine spirit, notions which came to change within this tradition from an act of divine grace to a fixed posses-

Reformation und Aufklärung 1550-1650 (Berlin, 1988), p. 774-799, esp. p. 782.

³⁶ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 424; on Edelmann's understanding of fantasy, cf. *Göttlichkeit*, p. 78 ff., 229 ff. On the spiritualistic ideal regarding the Berleburg Bible, cf. Martin Brecht, "Die Berleburger Bibel: Hinweise zu ihrem Verständnis", *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 8 (1982), p. 196 ff.

³⁷ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 233 ff.

³⁸ In Edelmann's opinion Wolff's followers despised Christianity for its lack of rationality. But they trust in their own forces of reason only and miss the true God (see Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 237). Truth is, as we see, not the result of philosophy but connected with correctly understood Christianity. Cf. also Edelmann, *Moses*, 1, 3, p. 105, that philosophers "are far removed from true wisdom is to be seen because they take sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, geometry and other similar exercises of intellect, which are only maid-servants of wisdom, for wisdom itself". Edelmann seems to repeat the criticism of reason that caused Pierre Poiret's and Johann Conrad Dippel's attacks against Spinoza (see Otto, *Studien zur Spinoza-rezeption*, p. 128-133), but when he speaks about Spinoza he does not remember it.

³⁹ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83; cf. p. 105, 270.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

sion.⁴² Terminologically, however, Edelmann follows the main vocabulary of enlightenment. This ambiguity causes difficulties as to the exact classification of Edelmann's thinking.⁴³

The concept of the divinity of reason has some consequences regarding the relation to the Bible. First of all, it is remarkable that this concept is given by the Bible. In analogy to the reformatory constellation, there is no conflict of authority on the one side and individual certainty of truth on the other. Instead of this, the Bible is the normative instance which is binding for both Edelmann and orthodoxy. Edelmann fulfils the criteria of theological method because he argues from Scripture.⁴⁴ Thus he fights against the orthodox interpretation of St. Paul's words compelling human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), a passage which orthodox theologians, according to Edelmann, used to suppress all opinions they disagreed with. Proverbs 29:7 claims that "The Godless do not esteem reason", proving that esteem for reason is a sign of the pious. To surrender in obedience can therefore only mean that foolish ideas should not be allowed to rule, as it is clear to all "that one and the same spirit can never sometimes recommend reason and sometimes speak about it in a discrediting manner".⁴⁵ Against the objections of a correspondent who noted a number of Bible statements, e.g. the offering of Isaac, which were impossible to harmonize with morality and reason, Edelmann proclaims that these are only apparent contradictions.⁴⁶

Sometimes, however, Edelmann does express doubts regarding the validity of the Bible. For one thing, he does not trust the various translations: indeed, *Die Göttlichkeit der Vernunft* was written to correct a crucial error of translation. Furthermore, there are critical remarks on the Bible tradition based on Edelmann's suspicion that Origen might have used another version of the Bible than the one known in this day. But this does not imply the discrediting of the

⁴² Cf. Bender, *Doppel*, p. 139-143; Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Veritas participes Dei: Der Spinozismus im Horizont mystischer und rationalistischer Theologie", in: *idem*, *Theodizee und Tatsachen. Das philosophische Profil der deutschen Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), p. 117-149, 138-142.

⁴³ Cf. Hans Schneider, "Der radikale Pietismus in der neueren Forschung", *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 9 (1983), p. 117-151, 124.

⁴⁴ Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 108 ff., 122 ff., 138, 147 ff., 180.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41 ff.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221 ff.

whole Bible. Criticism of the Bible, insofar as directed against translation or tradition, is still part of criticism of authority or institutions. The authors of the Bible and the Bible as a holy book are not attacked. But, of course, Edelmann's statement, that because of tradition and translation defects "there is nowadays no book more uncertain than the present Bible of sects"⁴⁷ does not refer only to the present form of the Bible but also to the Bible generally, as there is no intact form beyond the existing ones.

Edelmann also reflects on the relationship between reason or spirit and letter, which subordinates the external word to "our inner revelation",⁴⁸ but this is a commonplace within the spiritualist tradition.⁴⁹ Edelmann was free of doubt concerning the divinity of Scripture before reading the *TTP*, at least from the perspective of his autobiography. Whenever passages were impossible to harmonize with reason, Edelmann and his companions at the time tried to find a solution in another way: "We found some things that did not convince us but we were not courageous enough to think about them thoroughly and found our solution in mystical exegesis".⁵⁰

The affirmation of reason was an exegetical truth. This authoritative basis provided security of argumentation but at the same time it was binding, a binding authority which referred to personal experience beyond the authority itself and thusfar could lead to a transgression of authority. But apparently an impulse from outside was necessary to cause this transgression, and this impulse came from Spinoza. Shortly after reading the *TTP*, Edelmann shocked the public by his new insights about the Holy Scripture. In 1740 appeared *Moses mit aufgedeckten Angesicht*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁹ Cf., for example, Brecht, *Berleburger Bibel*, p. 170; Gustav A. Krieg, *Der mystische Kreis. Wesen und Werden der Theologie Pierre Poirets* (Göttingen, 1979), p. 113; Wolfgang Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin, 1989), p. 31-34; Bender, *Dippel*, p. 132-136.

⁵⁰ Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 300; at that time Edelmann occasionally favoured the use of allegory (cf. Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 474 ff., *Unschuldige Wahrheiten* 15, in: *Sämtliche Schriften* VI, p. 127-129, 420-435) against literal exegesis also used e.g. by the Socinians (Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 517). The allegorical method is also a characteristic element of the Berleburger translation of the Bible, cf. Brecht, *Berleburger Bibel*, p. 188.

MOSES MIT AUFGEDECKTEN ANGESICHT

Like *Unschuldige Wahrheiten*, *Moses* is written in the form of a dialogue. Two persons with speaking roles hold long conversations, and a third person named "Stockfinster" (utter darkness), represents orthodoxy; he is not present in person but his arguments affect the course of the conversation to a certain degree. "Lichtlieb" (lover of light) is the protagonist expressing Edelmann's own position while "Blindling" (blind) represents the average Christian who until now had relied on the words of the clergy. Lichtlieb's arguments shock him, and he tries to defend conventional Christianity using arguments learned from Stockfinster. But he does not shut his mind to Lichtlieb's explanations. This form of presentation is not only external: on the contrary, it has a deep influence on the content, as the argumentation is directed at a target group like Blindling, who is not a "philosophical reader",⁵¹ but a religiously interested layman who is independent in profession and interested in religious questions without being provided with particular intellectual capacities. The argumentation of *Moses* aims at destroying the authority of orthodoxy by discrediting the Bible as the highest instance of orthodoxy. Reaching this aim does not require a scientific treatise, systematically developed and giving information about its own method. A more rhetorical medium of explanation is more appropriate. Since Blindling is fixed on authority and opinions, Lichtlieb tries to convince him in the same way, by offering him various surprising opinions. Besides, this method also corresponded to Edelmann's own eclecticism.

Moses was published in 1740 in three "insights", or parts, in which Edelmann gradually unmasks Lutheran orthodoxy.⁵² Edelmann's criticism of the Bible can be found especially in part 1. Further insights, written between 1754 and 1756, were not published in Edelmann's lifetime and were printed for the first time in vol. VII, 2 of the *Sämtliche Schriften*.⁵³

The main subject of this volume is the investigation of the Mosaic

⁵¹ Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in: *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1924), 4 vols., III, p. 12.

⁵² A reprint is published in vol. VII, 1 of the *Sämtliche Schriften*. Each of the three "insights" has a new pagination.

⁵³ Cf. the introduction of this volume by Monika Ammermann-Estermann, which contains, among other things, an instructive survey of the content.

authorship of the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, we can ignore this part in the context of an investigation of Spinoza's influence. Even though Ezra, in Spinoza's opinion, plays a key role in the genesis of the Pentateuch and the following books of the Old Testament, or at least in their editorial review, and even though Edelmann's considerations on this topic could have been stimulated by Spinoza, there is nevertheless a crucial difference between Spinoza's *Tractatus* and these parts of *Moses*. While Spinoza considers Ezra to be at least partly responsible for editorial work on older writings, Edelmann believes that the Jewish scriptures were completely destroyed during the Babylonian exile.⁵⁴ Ezra becomes the inventor of Jewish history.⁵⁵ Edelmann's main evidence is the fourth Book of Ezra, a pseudepigraphic scripture of the first century.⁵⁶ The author's first-person report on re-writing the law after its destruction⁵⁷ is attributed by Edelmann to the Ezra of the Old Testament. The fact that the fourth Book of Ezra is not canonic Scripture does not stop him, for he takes the canon as an arbitrary collection or exclusion of scripture which only serves the clergy.⁵⁸ Reversing the then held claim that pagan authors depended on Moses, Edelmann says that Ezra had compiled his *Moses* from various scriptures, especially the Indian Vedas.⁵⁹ Since there are no documents or testimonials of non-Jewish authors before Ezra,⁶⁰ Edelmann assumes that Ezra had invented the history of his nation.⁶¹ His conclusion is that Ezra

⁵⁴ Cf. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, ed. Gebhardt III, p. 129; Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 2, p. 12, 26-28; he refers to Clement of Alexandria and an author of the 10th century.

⁵⁵ Cf. Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 2, p. 33 ff. Edelmann explicitly negates the claim that Ezra had compiled older writings (Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 2, p. 28).

⁵⁶ Cf. Josef Schreiner, "Das 4. Buch Ezra", in: *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, vol. V, *Apokalypsen* (Gütersloh, 1981), p. 301 ff. The seer who named himself Ezra dates his vision to the 30th year after the destruction of the city (Jerusalem 587 BC). Chronologically it is impossible that the author could be the Ezra we know. This is why the destruction is thought to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Cf. also Spinoza's derogatory remark on pseudepigraphy, particularly with regard to Ezra (Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, ed. Gebhardt III, p. 146).

⁵⁷ Schreiner, "Das 4. Buch Ezra", p. 402-405.

⁵⁸ Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 2, p. 13 ff.; VII, 1, 2, p. 133.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 47 ff., 55-62, 79-81, 90-94, 280-282.

⁶⁰ Cf. Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 2, p. 303, 351; cf. the 8th insight as a whole (VII, 2, p. 228-310), which is dedicated to the testimonium of Herodotus, Plato and other ancient authors: reports on the Jews cannot be found.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 33 ff, 250-260.

invented the idea of a 'chosen people',⁶² he wanted to give his nation a famous ancestor⁶³ and he did what all founders of religions do: a power-obsessed person looks for a silly people and, pretending to have received revelations, makes it dependent on himself.⁶⁴ This phenomenology of religion also applies to Christianity. Like the Jewish religion, it consists of lies, superstitions and stupidity.⁶⁵ Both Lichtlieb and Blindling leave the scene in this last of Edelmann's texts as decided non-Christians.⁶⁶

The first parts of *Moses* are coloured by another attitude, although there are heavy attacks against Christianity here as well. The theory which a great part of the text negates is the orthodox theory of inspiration. This theory proclaims that the authors of biblical books are not themselves the creators of the text but merely instruments of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷ But if the Bible is regarded as a letter of God to man, it has to fulfil the highest expectations in terms of perfection of text. Each defect provokes doubts about the whole. This conviction of the unshakeable quality of the Bible is also shared by Blindling at the beginning. Lichtlieb fights to change it. He refers to the different translations already existing in German, the variety of which is a demonstration against the unity which should be expected from the Holy Spirit and therefore evidence against the Holy Spirit's involvement. The various religious denominations all insist on the dogmatic character of their preferred editions of the Bible.⁶⁸ Catholic authors themselves concede the defectiveness of the Vulgate.⁶⁹ There are errors in Luther's translation as well. Corrected texts of Luther's translation were, however, published under Luther's name; this had led to quarrels among Lutherans and showed that even today texts by famous authors could be tacitly changed. One has to suppose that the same could have happened in former times.⁷⁰ Each new translation causes a disturbance, and for this reason orthodoxy does not like them. But these disturbances reveal 'the hand of God'

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2, p. 45.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 280.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 33 ff.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 315, 323, 336 ff.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 312, 329.

⁶⁷ Cf. Wilfried Joest, *Fundamentaltheologie. Theologische Grundlagen- und Methodenprobleme* (Stuttgart, 1988), p. 155-158.

⁶⁸ Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 1, 1, p. 75.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 75-77.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 82-85.

insofar as they demonstrate that salvation cannot be found in the Bible.⁷¹

The same variety applies to versions of the Bible. It is not right that differences between the versions can be neglected as being nothing but copying errors. Edelmann points out that it is impossible to ascertain which version corresponds to the inspired basic text. And why should God speak only through the authors and not through the copyists, who bear the same responsibility for the correct text?⁷²

Moreover, there are not only errors in the Bible, but intended frauds. Referring to books which unknown authors have published under the name of Hermes Trismegistus, Edelmann says one "can conclude that regarding the Bible the practice was the same".⁷³ Edelmann cites William Whiston's theory that the Jews of the second century had changed the Holy Scripture in order to remove from it prophecies regarding Jesus Christ;⁷⁴ he takes Marcion's reduced New Testament as an example of the arbitrariness involved in the composition of the New Testament⁷⁵ and quotes a series of other authors who have doubted the credibility of the Bible.⁷⁶ In this context he remarks that the writings of Moses have been lost. The source of this remark is Spinoza but also Karlstadt, Whiston, Richard Simon and others.

The cumulation of opinions rejecting the literal validity of biblical reporting⁷⁷ or casting doubt on the origin or on the quality of tradi-

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, I, 1, p. 78.

⁷² *Ibid.*, I, 1, p. 47 ff.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, I, 1, p. 125.

⁷⁴ Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 1, 1, p. 72 ff.; the source of this statement is the theological periodical *Unschuldige Nachrichten* (the name was repeatedly changed) which was founded in 1701 and provided a survey of current and older theological debates including discussion on heresies and the atheist movement. Edelmann assumes that the authors criticized in *Unschuldige Nachrichten* are eo ipso witnesses of truth (see Edelmann, *Göttlichkeit*, p. 70 ff.); *Unschuldige Nachrichten* are already used in the first "in sight" of "Moses" p. 20, 24, 56 ff., 58 f., 62, 64 ff., 72, 82 ff., 86, 111, 113 ff., 120, 126-129, 131, 133. On journals as a source of his knowledge about new theological publications, cf. Edelmann, *Selbstbiographie*, p. 71; on the *Unschuldige Nachrichten*, cf. Franz Blanckmeister, *Die erste theologische Zeitschrift* (Leipzig, 1893).

⁷⁵ Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 1, 1, p. 75.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 1, p. 55-58.

⁷⁷ Cf. Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 1, 1, p. 135-138, 60-6; Edelmann names various scholars who consider the Old Testament to be allegorical, e.g. Philo, Origen and especially the Helmstedt professor Hermann von der Hardt. Cf. Ludwig Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche* (Jena, 1869; reprint Leipzig, 1981), p. 361 ff.

tion is intended to undermine the notion of Scripture as divine inspiration. Blindling complains that the fall of the Bible means the fall of religion.⁷⁸ Lichtlieb, on the contrary, proclaims that only the decline of the Bible can effect a revival of religion, and that adherence to the Bible is dangerous. The defence of contradictions within the Bible leads to the suspicion that all religions are nothing but superstition and that men who strive for a rational existence should become atheists.⁷⁹ Others could be seduced into spiritual sluggishness by trust in Scripture.⁸⁰ God would have preserved the Bible in a undamaged form if he had really communicated with man on only one occasion.⁸¹ But as the Bible is damaged, God will speak again, and mankind should not rely on the written word. Even Jesus complained that biblical scholars should rely on God instead of studying their scriptures.⁸²

This relationship between the written word and personal experience is the main purpose of Edelmann's criticism. He attacks the Bible and calls it an idol because it occupies the place of God. He turns the accusation that critics of the Bible are atheists on Bible admirers. They have a God of paper instead of the true God.⁸³ Increasing disillusionment with the Bible is interpreted by him as a sign of an epoch-making religious beginning. "The Bible as an idol must fall if ever men are to see the living God in a vivid and convincing manner and if the true service of God in spirit and truth is to be reintroduced. He who does not wish to work against the Lord and has retained from the testimonials of the men of God [...] that the land shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, this man will enjoy in his inner soul that the Lord God of truth will bring about the time of fulfilling his promises in our days".⁸⁴

The imperfect tradition of the documents of the apostles and prophets is not only a normal phenomenon which is common to all ancient texts, it is even a sign of divine wisdom. God would have been able to preserve the Scriptures. If he did not, it is because of his intention to teach men not to look for God in writings.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Edelmann, *Moses*, VII, 1, 1, p. 69 ff.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 50; 2, p. 30

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 70.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 37.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1, p. 92.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1, 2, p. 30 ff., 40.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 2, p. 45.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 80-82; VII, 1, 2, p. 6, 28.

This scripture-living God polarity does not involve a definitive judgement on the inspiration of biblical Scriptures. When Blindling concludes from God's failure to preserve the Bible that the Bible is not inspired, Lichtlieb replies that God did not have to preserve it because he is always revealing himself.⁸⁶ It remains possible that the Bible is inspired. When Edelmann says that the Bible is divine but that it is not God,⁸⁷ he is afraid that the Bible could replace God. A reader who is aware of this danger can use the Bible as a higher authority. But direct consciousness of truth must govern interpretation of the Bible. This is the context of Edelmann's own use of the Bible: for him, biblical truth is not superior but just a little inferior to the truth as grasped by the individual. In contrast to Spinoza, Edelmann makes no methodical separation of philosophical truth and truth provided by revelation. On this basis, Edelmann can verify his conviction of God's presence through reference to biblical texts, ancient philosophers, Fathers of the Church and Spinoza,⁸⁸ or prove the eternity of the world by mean of the Bible,⁸⁹ or describe the God-man relationship according to Hebr. 1:3 as effulgence of God's splendour.⁹⁰

His acceptance of the inspiration of Scripture is not generally valid: it is right only insofar as the knowledge of God is propagated.⁹¹ And the Bible is not the only medium of revelation. The notion of a living God is, on the contrary, connected with the conviction of universal revelation. This notion can already be found in Edelmann's early writings, e.g. in the first part of *Unschuldige Wahrheiten*, which deals with religious tolerance. In *Moses* he includes the dimension of history of religion, pointing out that truth is everywhere: among pagans, Turks, Zoroaster, Confucius and so on.⁹² But the condition for cognition is the same as for Christian scriptures, namely that "everywhere with all writings notwithstanding their name one has to have an enlightened disposition which is able to distinguish between true and false. Otherwise neither the Bible nor any other divine book can help".⁹³

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 36.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 53.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 2, p. 129-144.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 3, p. 15 ff.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 3, p. 28.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 38 ff.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1, 1, p. 94-98.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1, 3, p. 88.

This relationship to the Bible, which oscillates between rejecting its claim to be absolutely true and accepting it as a source of religious truth, can also be found in Edelmann's later publications e.g. in *Begierde nach der vernünftigen lautern Milch* published in 1743, in which Edelmann replies to the questions of some of his followers. But he refuses to fulfil their desire to produce a reasonable, simplified form of the Bible. Something like that, he says, would only provoke new quarrels. Instead, he refers them to direct experience of God,⁹⁴ but he continues to accept the partial value of the Bible. In *Glaubensbekenntnis*, published in 1745, however, he advises against taking the detour of reading the Bible in order to reach God.⁹⁵ Perhaps the obstinacy of his followers in relying on the Bible as the word of God has caused this increasing distance. The scornful tone and the judgments in the latter parts of *Moses* show that at that time the Bible had lost its quality as a source of religious experience for him.

What are the consequences of this description regarding Edelmann's relationship to Spinoza? First, one has to see that Edelmann, in the context of his explanations on the Bible, hardly mentions or cites Spinoza. With respect to Spinoza's notorious reputation at this time, one can suppose that Edelmann intentionally avoids mentioning Spinoza in order not to diminish the effect of his own arguments. Edelmann quotes a great variety of witnesses, creating the impression that not only one notorious outsider but a mass of critics is aroused against the Bible. This cumulation of critical opinions, however, has no propaedeutic function. It is already the proof of the unreliability of the Bible and has to serve as a substitute for a real demonstration. It is impossible to prove a specific influence of Spinoza on this method. There are, however, a certain number of topics found in Spinoza's *Tractatus* as well as in Edelmann, e.g. the contradiction between the clergy's beliefs and behaviour, the observation that theologians interpret the Bible according to their dogma⁹⁶ and the general declaration that religion is inscribed by God in the human heart and should not be searched for in Scripture.⁹⁷ But when Spinoza, after these polemics or general

⁹⁴ Cf. Edelmann, *Die Begierde nach der vernünftigen lautern Milch*, in: *Sämtliche Schriften* X, p. 166-177.

⁹⁵ Cf. Edelmann, *Abgenöthigtes Jedoch Andern nicht wieder aufgenöthigtes Glaubensbekenntniß*, in: *Sämtliche Schriften* IX, p. 46 ff.

⁹⁶ Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, ed. Gebhardt III, p. 97 ff.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158 ff.

remarks, goes on to develop a scientific method of exegesis, Edelmann does not follow him. This means that Edelmann does not see the—in this context—double meaning of the *TTP*, which is both a work of criticism of religion and a fundamental book for a historical and critical investigation of the Old Testament. There are no signs of a neutral, scholarly investigation of Scripture. Despite an analogous stress on reason and the immanence of God, Edelmann does not deal with the questions of the relationship between the notion of God and the law of nature or the different kinds of knowledge provided either by Scripture or by reason, which are crucial for Spinoza.

The reason for this variance is the fundamental difference of problems which interest Spinoza and Edelmann. Edelmann is basically a theologian and his interests are of a theological nature. The subjects he discusses in his writings are almost exclusively theological or, better, religious ones. He is mainly interested in finding the right way to God. Between the extremes of inspired Christianity and orthodoxy, his notion of reason serves to guarantee the lasting presence of God and the right to the individual's own decisions in religion. Questions of modern philosophy or of natural science do not play any role for him. For Edelmann, the Bible represents the last obstacle on the way to a Christianity imbued with the immediate experience of God and free of any authority. Although he did not take over all the characteristic elements of the *TTP*, it was due to Spinoza's influence that Edelmann gained a critical distance to the Bible. Perhaps the words of his autobiography quoted above should have no other meaning.

3. BRITAIN

SPINOZA AND THE ENGLISH THINKERS.
CRITICISM ON PROPHECIES AND MIRACLES: BLOUNT,
GILDON, EARBERRY

Luisa Simonutti

SOME INITIAL ANTI-SPINOZA REACTIONS

The publication of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was immediately followed in England by an almost unanimous wave of condemnation, from the reflections on it of Robert Boyle and Henry Oldenburg, to the reaction of the major exponents of Latitudinarianism and of the Anglican Church, and up to the criticism of Nonconformists such as John Howe after the appearance of the *Opera Posthuma*.

Notwithstanding the fact that he was among the first English thinkers to be deeply impressed by and attracted to Spinoza's thought, after their initial encounter and the exchange of letters in the early 1660's Henry Oldenburg progressively put a distance between himself and that "odd Philosopher, yt lives in Holland, but no Hollander."¹ The reflections that Spinoza—involved as he was in writing the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the draft of the *Ethics*—was making on certain central themes of Christian doctrine and the interpretation of scriptural texts on such questions as miracles, the Resurrection and the existence of God and his attributes, threw the

¹ *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, ed. A. Rupert Hall & M. Boas Hall (Madison, Wisconsin, 1965-1977), 11 vols., II, p. 549. Besides K.O. Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (Paris, 1983; 1st ed. The Hague, 1896), partic. chap. VI; see also the studies of T.J. de Boer, "Spinoza in Engeland", *Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* 10 (1916), p. 331-36; J.J.V.M. de Vet, "Learned periodicals from the Dutch Republic and the Early Debate on Spinoza in England", in: *Miscellanea Anglo-Belgica* (Leiden, 1987), p. 27-39; and especially Sarah Hutton, "Henry Oldenburg and Spinoza", which will appear in the work edited by Paolo Cristofolini, *The Spinozistic Heresy...* (Amsterdam-Maarssen, forthcoming). See also my two essays: "Boyle and Spinoza. Natural philosophy and Rational Religion", to appear in: *Religion, Reason and Nature in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Robert Crocker (Dordrecht), and "Premières réactions anglaises au *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*", to appear in: *The Spinozistic Heresy*.

first shadow of doubt over the favourable reading that Oldenburg had originally made of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and contributed to the intransigence of the positions adopted by the two correspondents.

At the same time, Robert Boyle—for whom Oldenburg acted as mediator and spokesman in the long-distance dialogue between the great English chemist and the Dutch philosopher—had originally shared Oldenburg's respect for Spinoza's philosophical ideas. In his letters to the secretary of the Royal Society and by means of Oldenburg's letters which encouraged Spinoza to read and pronounce a judgment on some of Boyle's works and scientific convictions, the English chemist established an important dialogue with Spinoza. Questions relative to natural philosophy, the chemistry of the elements, the foundation of chemistry and experimental physiology were at the centre of their debate. The confrontation progressively focused on their different epistemological and philosophical positions: the rationalistic-mechanistic conception of Spinoza on the one hand and the corpuscular-experimental conception of Boyle on the other. Since by the middle of the 1670's the debate on physical-experimental themes came to concentrate on exegetic and philosophical-religious themes, notwithstanding Oldenburg's efforts the difference between the two positions became irreconcilable to the point that Boyle irremediably condemned Spinoza's thought.²

Better known is the strong critical reaction to Spinoza's thought expressed by the neo-Platonic philosopher Henry More,³ as well as by Ralph Cudworth, Anne Conway and minor representatives of the neo-Platonic circle of Cambridge, such as Richard Burthogge, Henry Jenkes and Oliver Doiley, and by the Oxford polemist and preacher Thomas Pierce. They made no secret of their dissent as far as Spinoza's system was concerned, sometimes ascribing it to the mechanicism and consequent atheism of Cartesian thought and

² Cf. Mss. Boyle, vols. III and VII preserved at the Royal Society of London. Part of these mss. on Spinoza, miracles and religion were published by Rosalie L. Colie, "Spinoza in England, 1665-1730", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963), p. 183-219.

³ Cf. Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1957) and also Sarah Hutton, "Reason and Revelation in the Cambridge Platonists, and their Reception of Spinoza", in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. K. Gründer & W. Schmidt-Biggemann (Heidelberg, 1984), p. 181-199; and my "Reason and Toleration. Henry More and Philip van Limborch", in: *Henry More (1614-1687). Tercentenary Studies*, ed. S. Hutton (Dordrecht, 1990), p. 201-218.

sometimes placing the emphasis on its affinity to Hobbes.⁴

In line with this interpretation, the Latitudinarian milieu also reacted to the appearance of Spinoza's works, and it was precisely John Stillingfleet, one of the major representatives of Latitudinarianism, who in his *Letter to a Deist* of 1677—but written two years earlier—publicly expressed the consternation aroused by the diffusion of Spinoza's philosophy in England.⁵ Stillingfleet again put forward his criticism of the “true Disciple to the Leviathan, Spinoza”⁶ and of Spinoza's deterministic and mechanistic-atheistic conception in the incomplete 1679 revision of his *Origines Sacrae*. We again find this typical anti-Spinoza reading in the circle of moderate non-conformists where Richard Baxter, on more than one occasion, directs his criticism against the Hobbesian pattern of Spinoza's determinism—a position that remained alive and was taken up again, together with the inherited neo-Platonic criticism of More, by the dissenter John Howe at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Even more sensitive were the reactions to Spinoza's metaphysical system on the part of the Boyle lecturers such as Richard Kidder, Richard Bentley, Samuel Clarke and John Harris, and of the apologists of the Christian religion. A common denominator of the criticism of Spinoza by the authors mentioned above, who are characterized by different philosophical, scientific and religious formations, was the attempt to throw light, in the first place, on the dangers of the Old Testament exegesis and the relationship between philosophy, religion and politics expounded in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Later, the appearance of the *Opera Posthuma* with their unequivocally atheistic-materialistic values convinced these authors of the necessity of condemning the work definitively. To their names must be added those of such thinkers and polemicists as Thomas

⁴ As regards the neo-Platonic circle and Henry More in particular, and certain reactions of the apologists of the Christian religion, cf. my “Premières réactions anglaises au *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*”.

⁵ Stillingfleet's reactions to Spinoza are examined in Richard H. Popkin, “The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971), p. 303-331; Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason. Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia, 1985); and in particular Sarah Hutton, “Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza”, included in the present volume.

⁶ Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae: or, a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Reveal'd Religion: To which is now added Part of another Book upon the same Subject, Written A.D. MDCXCVII*, in: *The Works* (London, 1710), 6 vols., II, p. 63.

Brown, Carroll, Nye, Lowth and Hickee,⁷ continuing up to the sceptic Ramsay.⁸

Despite such a seemingly uniform panorama, this is not to say, that there was a lack of positive critical attention paid to Spinoza's work. That there was not becomes clear from the presentation to the English public of the sixth chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* by Charles Blount, and above all from the publication in 1689 of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in English translation⁹ together with a further publication in 1737 compiled by anonymous translators. This represents an assent to Spinoza's thought which far from being open was more often than not disguised, especially around the turn of the century and at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to then, become, more manifest with Tindal and with Toland.¹⁰

OPEN AND DISGUISED ATTITUDES TO SPINOZA AT THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the short, anonymous piece *Rencontre de Bayle et de Spinoza dans l'autre monde*,¹¹ which enjoyed a certain success at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in an imaginary dialogue between Spinoza and Pierre Bayle the latter challenges Spinoza to name any author who has taken his work into consideration. Spinoza replies by recalling the interest that he had aroused in Simon de Vries and Jean Brun and in political personages such as the Prince de Condé¹² and the

⁷ Cf. De Boer, "Spinoza in Engeland"; Colie, "Spinoza in England", *Light and Enlightenment*, and "Spinoza and the Early English Deists", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), p. 23-46. See also De Vet, "Learned Periodicals from the Dutch Republic and the Early Debate on Spinoza in England".

⁸ On this author, see Marialuisa Baldi, "Confutazione di Spinoza e pironismo. La via al senso comune di A.M. Ramsay", *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 49 (1994-2), p. 215-261.

⁹ *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political, containing some few Discourses to prove that the Liberty of Philosophizing (that is, Making Use of Natural Reason) may be allow'd without any prejudice to Piety, or to the Peace and Religion it self must necessarily follow, where such a Liberty of Reasoning is taken away [...]* Translated out of Latin (London, 1689).

¹⁰ These last two authors, and also Locke's reflections on Spinoza's work which have been examined by Wim Klever and by Stuart Brown in the present volume, would require an analysis which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

¹¹ Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1711.

¹² On the presumed encounter between Spinoza and the Prince of Condé and on the sources from which the episode arose, see Richard H. Popkin, "Serendipity at the

Elector Palatine. He does not fail, however, to take into account a long list of polemicists, theologians, philosophers and scholars who, from the appearance of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* up to the last years of the seventeenth century had criticized his work in no uncertain terms. This list does not include the names of any English thinkers, not so much because they were few in number—on the contrary, we have just seen the extent of critical attention which had started up in England—but because of the negligible interest on the part of the anonymous writer in culture beyond the English Channel.

The interest in Spinoza of the English, on the other hand, was sparked off by the appearance of the English translation of the sixth edition of Moreri's *Grand Dictionnaire historique* in 1694 and, a few years later in 1701, by the publication of the same work edited by Jeremy Collier, both of which works contained items on the philosopher.¹³ Furthermore, in 1710 there appeared the first English translation of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* which immediately became a more or less obligatory point of reference for successive interpretations of Spinoza's philosophy, which, moreover, the English could now read in their own language.¹⁴ The interest in Spinoza is further confirmed by the circulation of short biographies, such as the one included in the *Lives*¹⁵ compiled by various authors on English and foreign personages and which appeared in 1704, and by the publication of the English translation of *The Life of Benedict de Spinoza* by John Colemus.¹⁶ Furthermore, in 1720, a brief account of the life and works of Spinoza preceded a compilation in English of certain significant chapters of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.¹⁷

Clark: Spinoza and the Prince of Condé", *The Clark Newsletter* 10 (1986), p. 4-7.

¹³ Louis Moreri, *The great historical, geographical, genealogical and poetical dictionary; being a curious miscellany of sacred and profane history [...] Collected from the best historians, chronologers, and lexicographers [...] but more specially out of Lewis Morery, his 6th edition corrected and enlarged by Monsieur Le Clerck [...] Now done into English...* (London, 1694). A second edition corrected and enlarged to the year 1688 by Jeremy Collier appeared in two volumes in 1701.

¹⁴ Pierre Bayle, *An Historical and Critical Dictionary*. Translated into English (London, 1710), 4 vols. Wayne I. Boucher, *Spinoza in English. A Bibliography from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Leiden, 1991), p. 24 cites a second edition, edited by Des Maizeaux, published in five volumes in London (1734-1738) and also a ten-volume edition edited by G. Strahan (1734-1741).

¹⁵ *Lives, English and forein [...] including the History of England, and others nations of Europe, from the year 1660, to the year 1690*. By several hands... (London, 1704), 2 vols.

¹⁶ London: by D.L. and sold by B. Bragg, 1706.

¹⁷ *An account of the life and writings of Spinoza. To which is added, An abstract of his*

From the suggestions of Leslie Stephen¹⁸ and the studies of Rosalie Colie (and even earlier from Voltaire's references) up to contemporary scholars who have dealt with specific aspects of the negative and positive reactions to the dissemination of Spinoza's philosophy in England, the varied and complex circle of deists between the end of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth century has been pointed to as a fertile field for the fortunes of that philosopher.

However, for a closer examination of this philosophical debate in England, and in particular as regards the positive attention paid to Spinoza's philosophy, there is one question which the present analysis will centre on, namely the debate surrounding the legitimacy of prophecies and the existence of miracles, which widely engaged the apologists for the Christian religion but which chiefly attracted the attention of certain deists and free-thinking authors. The debate is presented as a privileged territory in which Spinoza's thought is taken up in a disguised and ambiguous fashion as in Earbery, and at times without even any attempt to disguise it with a condemnation as in the case of Blount.

In these authors the analysis of the exegetical-historical and political contribution of the *Tractatus*, against which early criticisms were directed, gradually became linked with the philosophical-religious content of the *Ethics* which, on its publication, gave rise to a new wave of reactions. Although the present analysis is limited chiefly to these authors, it is, nonetheless, clear that Spinoza's thought, even later on in the course of the century, was present, indirectly and *in sordina*, in the discussion of those themes carried out by a large section of eighteenth century deists up to Voltaire. It is not necessary, furthermore, to reiterate that in the conceptions of metaphysics and natural philosophy of some of the deists and free-thinkers, the presence of Spinoza's thought is equally to be felt even though it is openly criticized.

Among Voltaire's numerous attacks on prophecies, miracles and

Theological Political Treatise. Containing I. His discourses of prophecy. II. Of prophets. III. Of the gift of prophecy to other nations as well as the Jewish. IV. Of ceremonies. V. Of miracles. VI. Of the dependency of religion, and all things relating to it, on the civil magistrate. VII. Of the liberty of thinking and speaking... (London, 1720). For the successive bibliography, cf. Boucher, *Spinoza in English*.

¹⁸ L. Stephen, *A History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1876), 2 vols.

superstition in the pages of the *Encyclopédie*, the *Dictionnaire* and in many others of his works, in particular in the *Lettres sur les miracles*, he traces an imaginary line which links those thinkers who have reflected critically on the theme of miracles:

C'est ainsi que raisonnent les nombreux partisans de Celse, de Porphyre, d'Apollonius, de Simmaque, de Libanius, de l'empereur Julien, de tous les philosophes jusqu'au temps des Pomponace, des Cardan, des Machiavel, des Socin, de milord Herbert, de Montaigne, de Charron, de Bacon, du chevalier Temple, de Locke, de milord Shaftesbury, de Bayle, de Voolaston, de Toland, de Tindal, de Collins, de Wolston, de milord Bolingbroke, de Midleton, de Spinoza, du consul Maillet, de Boulainvilliers, de du Marsais, de Meslier, de la Métrie et d'une foule prodigieuse de déistes répandus aujourd'hui dans toute l'Europe, qui, comme les musulmans, les Chinois et les anciens Parsis, croiraient insulter Dieu, s'ils lui supposaient un fils qui ait fait des miracles dans la Galilée.¹⁹

In effect, the discussion of the question of prophecies and miracles goes well back to the period of the Renaissance—the debate had, in fact, already been taken up by the Fathers of the Church²⁰—but with the Reformation it acquired renewed vigour. It was not so much the legitimacy of prophecies and miracles in the Testaments and in later epochs up to Constantine that was held in doubt as the credibility of miracles in the modern epoch.

In England in particular, from the end of the sixteenth century up to the first decades of the seventeenth century, the debate, in both the Anglican and Puritan fields, revolved around the question of the cessation of miracles consequent on the attempt on the part of organized Christianity to bridle impostures and belief in diabolic phenomena.²¹ Such a debate had, to a large extent, an anti-Catholic function, but in the course of the century it inevitably came to have a political significance also, insofar as any admission as to the cessation of miracles or their legitimacy, or their diabolic origin, perforce discredited, the divine figure of the sovereign whose thaumaturgic powers comprised part of his public functions.²² Thus, any discus-

¹⁹ Voltaire, *Questions sur les miracles. Première Lettre*, in: *Oeuvres complètes*, (Basle, 1790–1792), 100 vols., vol. 67, p. 340.

²⁰ Cf. Daniel P. Walker, "La cessazione dei miracoli", *Intersezioni* 3 (1983), p. 285–301.

²¹ Cf. Daniel P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits* (London, 1981), esp. p. 66–70 and 72–73.

²² This is true for English and French monarchs and is still to be felt throughout the course of the seventeenth century. Cf. the above-mentioned studies of Walker, and Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven–London, 1992).

sion of miraculous intervention and of the existence of miracles in religion attacked at one and the same time the doctrinal integrity of Christianity and the function of the Ecclesiastic and political institutions.

CHARLES BLOUNT, THOMAS BROWN AND CHARLES GILDON

It is, therefore, significant that in 1683 Thomas Brown (an obscure clergyman), in a piece written on *Miracle work's above and contrary to Nature*,²³ underlines the question in a critical reply to the work *Miracles, no violation of the laws of Nature*²⁴ which had appeared a short time before, also in the course of the year 1683. He accuses the anonymous author-translator—in reality the aforementioned Charles Blount—of tending

to the subversion either of Religion or Civil Authority. The former of these is unquestionably the Design of this Treatise; since the asserting *That there is no such thing as a Miracle*, i.e. a *Work above Nature*, undermines the Foundations of both Law and Gospel, overthrows the Credit and Authority of Divine Revelation, and remits us either to a bare Religion of Nature and Morality, or to none at all.²⁵

Brown breaks down and analyses the component parts of the work and makes clear to the reader that it is made up of a *collage* of texts by various authors translated and linked together by a few connecting phrases. *The Premonition to the candid reader* with which the short volume opens is no more than a long passage taken from Thomas Burnet's work *Telluris Theoria Sacra*.²⁶

Blount shares Burnet's conviction that the authors of the sacred texts, in their accounts of Divine power and teaching and in their descriptions of miracles, do not so much intend to impart scientific knowledge as to divulge the working of God in a way that is accessible to the human mind and capable of arousing in it a feeling of faith. And, still in the words of Burnet, Blount sums up his own concept of natural philosophy and his interpretation of miracles—ques-

²³ Thomas Brown, *Miracles work's above and contrary to Nature: or, an Answer to the late Translation out of Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Mr. Hobb's Leviathan, etc. Published to undermine the Truth and Authority of Miracles, Scriptures, and Religion, in a Treatise entituled Miracles no violation of the Laws of Nature* (London, 1683).

²⁴ Charles Blount, *Miracles, no violation of the laws of Nature* (London, 1683).

²⁵ Brown, *Miracles work's above and contrary to Nature*, p. 1-2.

²⁶ Cf. Thomas Burnet, *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (London, 1681), p. 114.

tions that he had pondered in other writings of the same years—as follows:

This well consider'd, as we are not to admire, if we find in the *holy Scripture* many memorable things related as *Miracles*, which yet notwithstanding, proceeded from the fixt and immutable Order of *Nature*, and necessarily flowed from a series of Causes ordain'd according to her eternal Laws, that is, from *God's Decrees* so ought we not rashly to accuse any man of *Infidelity*, only because he refuses to believe, that those *Miracles* were effected by the *immediate* Power of God, such as is not only inconsistent with, but point blank *repugnant* to the fundamental Laws and Constitutions of Nature, which he in his infinite *Wisdom* hath made, and made so ample and fertile, as to extend to the certain production of whatever Events he hath will'd and decreed.²⁷

Hence a prodigious event surprises the limited mind of man who, consequently, precisely because of his limitations, is not capable of understanding the principles of nature which give rise to it. He concludes the preface still more effectively by denying any credibility to the existence of miracles or, in other words, to rare effects which are absolutely above and actually contrary to the laws of nature. This would mean opposing God to God and detracting from his perfect Divine nature the quality of immutability.

Blount continues to rigorously follow the line of naturalism, quoting early on in his work the initial paragraphs of the chapter on miracles in *Leviathan*.²⁸ By means of Hobbes's words, he goes back to a theme of his own according to which the admiration for rare or never-seen events, attributed by us to the direct intervention of God, is simply the fruit of our ignorance and lack of experience.

At the end of the passage from Hobbes, in one of his rare interventions, he reiterates his conviction as a naturalist that the causes of the admiration which transforms a purely natural event into a miracle originate in the rarity of the event itself and in our own ignorance. After dwelling briefly on the role of superstition in the diffusion of the belief in miracles,²⁹ he hands the reader over to Spinoza himself.

²⁷ Blount, *Miracles, no violation of the laws of Nature*, Preface.

²⁸ Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in: *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London, 1839), vol. III, part III, chap. 37.

²⁹ Blount, *Miracles, no violation of the laws of Nature*, p. 3: "Admiration then (we see) is generally greater or less according to the various degrees of Science and observation among men; the most ignorant being most prone to wonder: and the *Causes* of Admiration, which many times makes a Miracle of what is purely natural, we have

Once again without notifying the reader, Blount quotes the translation of most of the sixth chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.³⁰ Spinoza's criticism of miracles, which is even more in depth than that of the authors quoted before, constitutes the most conspicuous part of the short piece. Spinoza offers to the attention of critics the idea that Divine power and providence are fully demonstrated by unusual events that are contrary to the natural order and he takes up the defence of those who explain or try to interpret such events by means of natural causes. These scholars—Blount more explicitly uses the term 'Atheists'—are accused of denying God because, for the populace—who know no other way of adoring God than that of attributing to him prodigious acts which bend and go beyond the laws of nature—to provide a natural explanation for miracles means to diminish Divine providence and power. These widespread opinions and prejudices contribute to forming a confused idea of two powers, namely God and Nature, distinct and antithetical, where the brute power of Nature must be subjugated to Divine sovereignty.

This attitude of blind devotion—or rather of superstition, according to Blount—hinders wise men in the study of the constituent laws of nature. Spinoza, on the contrary, proposes to demonstrate that every event, even if it is apparently miraculous, follows the fixed and immutable order of nature and that it is precisely the natural order that enables us to have a better understanding of the Divine essence and of Divine Providence. Indeed, miracles can be of no help in enabling us to make this cognitive effort. Spinoza then focuses critical attention on the concept of Providence as expounded in the *Holy Scriptures* in order to demonstrate that it is no more than the realisation of the natural order by means of its laws. Spinoza concludes the exposition of his thesis, which he himself defines as of no small importance in the general scope of the work, with a historical-critical reading of events erroneously interpreted as miracles.

Blount's translation, which is largely faithful to Spinoza's text—although he does not quote the concluding sections of the chapter dedicated to Scriptural examples—is not devoid of perspicacity and a certain linguistic intensity in the choice of terms and concepts, thus

found to be *Rarity* and *Ignorance*. II. If this Disquisition be yet a little farther pursued, it will soon appear, that *Superstition* also contributes largely to the belief of Miracles."

³⁰ *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in: *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1972), 4 vols., III, p. 81-96.

reformulating Spinoza's thought in the manner of a concise and incisive criticism without leaving any possibility for miracles.

Blount concludes his compilation with three brief passages: one from St Augustine against the erroneous use of reason in the interpretation of the Scriptures; another from the already mentioned work of Thomas Burnet on the futility of having recourse to the concept of miracles insofar as the natural explanation of phenomena is sufficient. The third passage is taken from the *History of the Royal Society* by Thomas Sprat in which the author warns that it is a dangerous error to entrust the reputation of Divine power and wisdom to natural events, whereas it should be sought out in the pacific guide of the entire creation which does not force the established laws.

By means of these quotations, which are, all told, homogeneous and taken from authors free from any accusation of atheism, Blount seeks to further support his criticism of miracles. The analysis of the relationship between the miraculous event and the notion of a natural, universal order which emerges from the selected writings of Blount, constitutes an in-depth study and a shifting of the question from the plane of religious polemics, that is, against the imposture of the clergy which encourages a false belief in supernatural phenomena, that typical of his early works, to grounds that are more properly philosophical. By means of the authors quoted, Blount sustains the conformity of the natural order against the design of Divine Providence and, consequently, the uselessness of the ordinary intervention of God, to the point of giving, in his later works, a totally naturalistic explanation, not only of miraculous events and of prophecies, but also of religion itself and of its historical evolution.³¹

The writing of *Miracles, no violation of the laws of Nature* with its strong tone thus led Brown to write a minutely reasoned confutation. In his reply, *Miracles work's above and contrary to Nature*, Brown emphasised the diversity of the philosophical concepts of the authors cited by Blount and the principal weakness of the compilation which, by extrapolating various passages, at times even marginal to the central theme of the original works, presents them out of context, thereby involving the reader in an interpretation substantially different from the original works.

³¹ In this context, see Ugo Bonanate, *Charles Blount. Libertinismo e deismo nel Seicento inglese* (Firenze, 1972), p. 52-53.

All of them, except Spinoza are against the opinion for which they are produced.³²

Hence Brown maintains that if one were to consider the works of these authors in their entirety, they would demonstrate the legitimacy of miracles and of prodigies that go beyond the laws of nature and which derive directly from the will of God. The sole exception is Spinoza, the only author who is really consistent with Blount's thesis. Brown in fact asserts that:

Spinoza indeed is the great Patron of his Assertion.³³

Brown concludes his critical review by underlining the desire on the part of the editor of the compilation to carry out a work of propaganda by means of this device of a literary collage, without letting the reader know the sources of his more dangerous quotations, in other words Spinoza's reasoning, which are the only ones that really uphold the illegitimacy of belief in miracles and, hence, are capable of instilling in the mind of the reader the principles of Deism or Atheism.³⁴ As mentioned above, in 1683 the English translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* had not yet appeared (it was to appear only six years later) and Spinoza's text was still known to only a few; a factor that makes it difficult for the reader to identify the pages which are specifically Spinoza's.

Blount, for his part, intended in this work to continue his criticism of revealed religions and of prophecies which had been set in motion by earlier or contemporary works such as *Great is Diana of the Ephesians* and *Religio laici*.³⁵

It was Charles Gildon, miscellaneous writer from a Catholic family, who embraced Whig ideals and deist philosophical conceptions, who was to assume the task of defending Blount, the man and his writings, although his attitude was more cautious as regards Blount's more extreme forms of deism. Gildon can be counted among the first deists and, like Blount, he also had an interest in political activity and the publication of pamphlets in defence of Republican ideals. Like other deists, Blount and Gildon took up a position against the

³² Brown, *Miracles work's above and contrary to Nature*, p. 67.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁵ Ch. Blount, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians, Or, The Original of Idolatry, Together with the Politick Institution of the Gentiles Sacrifices* (1679) and *Religio laici. Written in a Letter to John Dryden Esq.* (1683). In general on Blount, see Bonanate, *Charles Blount*.

politico-religious thought of Hobbes, while they found in the rationalism of Herbert of Cherbury, Locke and Spinoza, which they more or less openly adopted, the authority for their religious rationalism. After having edited and republished a collection of the works of his friend Blount,³⁶ he chose to re-enter the milieu of Catholicism and distance himself from deist thought.³⁷

Charles Gildon, in his work *The Deist's Manual or a Rational Enquiry into the Christian Religion with some considerations on Mr Hobbes, Spinoza etc.* which appeared in 1705, gives a wide berth to Hobbes' pattern of speculative atheism. He sets out to furnish a refutation of atheism and a critical interpretation of some of the central themes of deist thought. It is thus that Gildon dedicates the *Discours* which concludes the volume on the theme of miracles and prophecies.

During the course of the debate, which involves *Christophil* the rational theologian, "an honest man", *Philaletes* the cautious deist, *Pleonexus* the extreme atheist and *Christophorus* the convinced theist, Gildon examines the possibility of producing miracles, their legitimacy and the significance of prophecies as events suitable for proving—according to the traditional arguments of Christian apologetics—the veracity and the certainties of the Christian religion.³⁸ He lists the characteristics of a miraculous event by imitating the arguments

³⁶ The works in question are a miscellany of Blount's writings entitled *The Oracles of Reason*, containing also letters from Gildon and other authors, edited after Blount's death by Gildon himself who is also the author of the *Preface* and the *Account of the Life and the Death* of Blount. Cf. also John Leland, *A view of the principal deistical writers that have appeared in England in the last and present Century* (London, 1757), 2 vols., I, p. 37-43.

³⁷ John Leland writes in this connection in his work *A view of the principal deistical writers*, p. 43: "But what deserveth our special notice, Mr. Gildon the publisher of the *Oracles of Reason*, and who had recommended them to the world, with a pompous elogium, was afterwards, upon mature consideration, convinced of his errors; of which he gave a remarkable proof, in a good book, which he published some years after, in 1705, intitled *The Deist's Manual*. It is observable, that the greatest part of this book is taken up in vindicating the doctrines of the existence and attributes of God, his providence and government of the world, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. And his reason for it was, as he himself intimates, because many of the Deists, with whom he was well acquainted, did really deny those great principles which lie at the foundation of all religion, or at least represented them as doubtful and uncertain. And their not admitting natural religion in its just extent formed some of their principal prejudices against the Christian revelation."

³⁸ Cf. Ch. Gildon, *The Deist's Manual or a Rational Enquiry into the Christian Religion with some considerations on Mr Hobbes, Spinoza, the Oracles of Reason, Second Thoughts, etc., To which is prefix'd a Letter, from the Author of the Method with the Deists* (London, 1705), p. 255.

typical of the denigrators of miracles—arguments which had been taken up by Hobbes and Spinoza. But Gildon uses them in a contrary sense, precisely, in order to demonstrate the existence and veracity of miracles. The latter must go beyond human potentiality, be outside the immutable order of nature and be unpredictable. But in concluding the examination of these characteristics, he again turns the argument upside down and declares:

I shall only add here, that if we examine all the Miracles of the Old and New Testament, there is not one which is contradictory, or repugnant to the Nature, or Essence of things. God has done Miracles of all sorts, but yet they can all be expressed in intelligible Propositions.³⁹

Gildon then analyses the role of miracles in the legitimization of prophecies and of Revelation itself which, in their turn, become messengers and signs of the true faith. Finally, he concludes the volume by leaving to *Christophil* the final word in defence of miracles.

I think it is an invincible Proof of the Miracles of Christ, that the Doctrine they promote is founded on Reason, and deducible from Nature, and *Right-Reason*; and therefore that it was worthy the Almighty Goodness to work Miracles for a Doctrine so agreeable to his own Divine Attributes, and which he had originally establish'd in the Nature, and for the Happiness of Human kind, so to convince the World of the Habitual Error, which had depriv'd them of the use of their Reason.⁴⁰

Christophil's arguments, which are supported by the theist and convince the cautious deist *Philalethes* to make a reassuring re-entry into the limits of orthodoxy, also take into account the doubts of *Pleonexus* who, from the very beginning of the work, had been the perfect atheist. But this re-entry into religious legality is not sufficient to cancel an exposition of the arguments and examples from the Testaments which are deliberately carried out according to the traditional form of investigation of which Gildon is well aware. Nor does he try to conceal the circularity of the demonstration and its intrinsic weakness, but rather, in a last attempt, he cannot help but call to the aid of his arguments, and in short, to the aid of Revealed Religion, the luminaries of reason.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

MATTHIAS EARBERY

The man who most closely examined Spinoza's ideas on prophecies and miracles was Mattias Earbery, (Erbery, Earbury) School-Master of Wye in Kent, who, a few years after the appearance of the English translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, proposed to furnish an exhaustive refutation of the first seven chapters of the work. In his preface to the work *Deism examin'd and confuted. In an Answer to a Book intituled, Tractatus Theologico Politicus*,⁴¹ the author declares his intention of fighting the diffusion of deist principles which impugn the basis of Revelation. He is convinced that an accurate analysis of the first chapters of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is sufficient to reveal the dangers of Spinoza's philosophy and that a detailed confutation of them will constitute a valid reply to the entire work of the philosopher.

Earbery begins by recalling that Hobbes had attacked the Sacred writings but that Spinoza is the author who actually destroys Divine authority by striking at the basis of religion in his critique of prophecies and miracles and of the sacred authors whom he makes out to be no more than impostors.⁴² According to Earbery, the exercise of this excessive freedom in criticism has thus harmed both ecclesiastical and civil authority. And although he does not wish to go as far as to affirm that an excessive freedom favours deism, nor does he wish to invoke controls on the part of the authorities, nevertheless he recognizes the necessity of placing a limit on the corruption and controversies that agitated the Church itself. His pessimistic concept of human nature and his battle against "those Deistical and Sceptical notions which are too frequent in this Age"⁴³ induce in him an idea of liberty which is close to that of Hobbes. It is inevitable, therefore, that he should direct his criticism against Spinoza's political concepts and his defence of liberty, which Blount and the deists, on the contrary, highlighted and made their own.

In proposing to furnish a "collective Answer to the whole Book"⁴⁴ rather than a philosophical and philological confutation not easily

⁴¹ The work circulated under two different titles: *An answer to a book intituled, Tractatus Theologico Politicus* (London, 1697), and: *Deism examin'd and confuted. In an answer to a book intituled, Tractatus Theologico Politicus* (London, 1697).

⁴² *Ibid.*, Preface.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Dedication. See also p. 160.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Preface.

accessible to the greater part of the people, Earbery presents his arguments in the form of a dialogue between *Scepticus*, a sharp-witted and erudite gentleman, and *Logicus*, a grave old divine.

The manner in which the author presents the two protagonists of this long dialogue, which unravels in the course of five successive encounters, is significant. He dwells at length on a description of the character and cultural formation of the first interlocutor *Scepticus*. The latter, "always eager after new things", loves to distance himself from popular concepts. He has been raised on the classical authors and has completed his education by studies on the moral works of the ancient philosophers. Since he was no longer interested in concepts that were too banal and obvious, he took up the atomistic philosophy brought to its apogee by Descartes and Gassendi. From his encounter with these authors he apprehended the importance of new fields of investigation relative to matter and movement and the value of freedom of investigation and of thought without any deferent approval of the authority of the ancient authors.

Later on, *Scepticus*—Earbery proceeds with his long introduction of the character—was able to recognize the importance of the debate which was developing around religion and its mysteries. This interest led him to a diligent perusal of the Socinian writers from whom he later distanced himself because of the weakness and questionability of their position. At this point the unfortunate encounter with the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza took place.

This turn'd him a perfect Deist, he threw away his Bible, and set up this Book in the room of it. He now thought himself to be set at liberty above the slavish condition of those, who thought they were to be rul'd by their Bibles.⁴⁵

Of the second interlocutor, *Logicus* (his name becomes *Theist* in the course of the dialogue), Earbery says no more than that his fervour was such as to cause him to be derided for his religious zeal.

It is worthwhile to question the reasons for such an unequal introduction of the two characters. The author had perhaps intended to obtain the benevolence of the reader towards *Scepticus* who, although he had ended up with the deists and atheists, had, nonetheless, always been educated as a 'virtuoso'. But it is more probable that Earbery wanted to accentuate the apologetic nature of the work and attribute the whole merit for the final conversion of the atheist

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

to the doctrinal arguments of *Logicus* rather than to his erudition and ability as an orator.

Notwithstanding his shrewdness, Earbery more than once in the course of the work allows a certain admiration for Spinoza to appear, for his concept of law in the field of the relation between religion and politics and for his criticism of superstition in its various forms. Furthermore, the questions and concise interventions of *Scepticus* do not constitute a mere *argumentum ad hominem*, nor a rhetorical stratagem in order to give his interlocutor the opportunity to make long and articulate replies but, on the contrary, they embody the more significant aspects of Spinoza's reflections in the first chapters of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Consistent with the method of investigation of the Dutch philosopher, he reproduces his criticism of superstition as contained in the preface to the *Tractatus*. He then brings his interlocutor back to a more correct reading of the chapters dedicated to the criticism on prophecies and the figures of the prophets and expounds the salient concepts of these chapters. The discourse on the imagination and style of the prophets and their role in the field of religion and politics, the discussion on the existence of miracles in relation to the laws of nature and Divine perfection and power, and finally the value of the truth of miracles themselves in relation to religious belief, all involve the old divine in wide-ranging replies.

Logicus replies in his turn by defending the legitimacy of miracles and the predictions of the prophets, using arguments typical of the Christian apologists and referring to Old and New Testament texts. But, by placing himself in line with tradition, he falls into the tautological circle of wishing to demonstrate the truth and credibility of Revelation by means of signs and events which, in their turn, require the support of Revelation for their legitimacy.

The critical points made by *Scepticus* and his exhortation to proceed in the analysis of the various questions by separating the domain of faith from that of human laws, and the terrain of the Divine laws from that of human laws, are not sufficient to withstand the arguments and the religious zeal of *Logicus*.

Earbery's work, therefore, reads like a dialogue between two deaf men and concludes with a capitulation on the part of the atheist to the zealous divine. The author seems to build up his work by reserving most space to the long and learned arguments of *Scepticus* with the aim of rendering still more evident—in a finale which, although

predictable, manages to surprise and is not lacking in rhetorical effect—that such arguments, based as they are on Spinoza's philosophy, are ineffectual in the face of Christian apologetics. However, notwithstanding his efforts to furnish a refutation of Spinoza's thought and of deism, Earbery ends his work leaving the reader with the doubt that his apology for the Christian religion, in fact, hides a disguised reformulation of Spinoza's thought or, at least, that even if this result was far from his intentions, nevertheless his work contributed to the diffusion of Spinoza's thought precisely among those who were not scholars or, in other words, the "Little People".

In the last years of the seventeenth century, yet another author concerned himself with the chapters in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* dedicated to prophecies, prophets and miracles. In the work *A Discourse concerning the Nature of man*,⁴⁶ James Lowde⁴⁷ leaves aside, for the space of a few pages, his criticism on Hobbes in order to devote himself to an analysis of passages from Spinoza. He briefly but acutely expounds Spinoza's thesis, only to conclude, however, with a criticism of the relation posited by the philosopher between natural knowledge and Divine revelation and with a criticism of Spinoza's concept of imagination and fancy.⁴⁸

At around the same time, in 1696,—only a mere mention is possible in the present analysis—Toland submitted for publication his rational criticism of the concept of mystery. After a careful analysis of the Holy Scriptures, he interpreted the mysteries of Christianity as truths not yet revealed and launched into a discussion of the concept of a miracle as an event that is comprehensible and possible in itself but which manifests itself in extraordinary ways⁴⁹—a discussion to which he would return on more than one occasion in the course of his works.

But the attention paid to the debate on prophecies, miracles and the figure of Spinoza remained lively and indeed was renewed in the first twenty years of the eighteenth century and even beyond, as can

⁴⁶ J. Lowde, *A Discourse concerning the Nature of man, both in his Natural and Political Capacity: Both as he is A Rational Creature, and Member of a Civil Society. With an Examination of some of Mr. Hobbs's Opinions relating hereunto* (London, 1694).

⁴⁷ Cf. Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 57 ff.

⁴⁸ Lowde, *A Discourse concerning the Nature of man*, p. 37-49.

⁴⁹ J. Toland, *Christianity not Misterious* (London, 1696), part III, chapters IV-V. See also Chiara Giuntini, *Panteismo e ideologia repubblicana: John Toland (1670-1722)* (Bologna, 1979), esp. chapters II and IV.

be seen from a volume which appeared in London in 1720 composed, for the most part, of an abstract of the first chapters of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and of a brief account of the life and works of Spinoza.⁵⁰

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE DEIST CRITICISM OF MIRACLES AND PROPHECIES

Towards the middle of the seventeen-twenties, Anthony Collins brought out *The Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons for the Christian Religion* and *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy considered*, two works which were seen by his contemporaries as an attack launched against the possibility of grounding Christianity either apologetically or rationally. In particular, he delegitimized the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, interpreting them as "typical and allegorical" proofs of Revelation and not as definite demonstrations of the truth of Revelation.⁵¹ Moreover, taken like this, the prophecies of the Christian religion seemed analogous to those of certain pagan religions. Similarly, according to Collins, the miracles both of the Old and of the New Testament did not constitute a proof of the truth of the prophecies nor of Divine teaching.⁵² The sources which he uses in the course of his analysis are numerous and significant. Among these I shall simply mention Richard Simon, Le Clerc and "all the Books written by Jews against the Christian religion". Among these last, Collins cites the work of Saul Levi Mortera, "the master of the famous Spinoza".⁵³

What is more, even though in the course of the eighteenth century the references to Spinoza were more indirect, Spinoza's interpretation permeates the debate on prophecies and miracles, and the same holds true, for example, particularly in the case of the deists Thomas Woolston and Conyers Middleton.

⁵⁰ *An account of the life and writings of Spinoza. To which is added, An abstract of his Theological Political Treatise. Containing I. His discourses of prophecy. II. Of prophets. III. Of the gift of prophecy to other nations as well as the Jewish. IV. Of ceremonies. V. Of miracles. VI. Of the dependency of religion, and all things relating to it, on the civil magistrate. VII. Of the liberty of thinking and speaking.*

⁵¹ Anthony Collins, *The Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons for the Christian Religion* (London, 1724), p. 39-103. For a study of the influence of Spinoza's writings in Anglican scriptural criticism, see Reedy, *The Bible and Reason*.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2 ff.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Woolston, in the work *Six Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*, explicitly follows the line of thought of Collins and extends the critical methodology of the latter. According to Woolston, not only the miracles of the Old Testament but also the works of Christ and the miracles of the New Testament must be interpreted allegorically. To the contrary, the attribution of historical credibility and the literal interpretation of prodigies proposed by the apologists of religion lead to obvious contradictions and absurdities.⁵⁴ Nor does he fail to dwell on the power of imagination precisely in relation to prodigies, cures etc., to then conclude, supported by numerous evangelical quotations, that miracles are nothing more than the fruit of able manipulation or natural events which by means of narration and allegorical interpretation take on the significance and appearance of extraordinary events. Woolston's work on miracles is clearly on the same side as the works of Collins and takes full part in the contemporary debate between the Church of England and the free-thinkers.

Middleton's work on miracles, *Free Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers* (London, 1749), published towards the middle of the century seems less extreme. He safeguards the possibility and the legitimacy of the miracles in the Old and the New Testament and the good faith and credibility of the prophets and the biblical Evangelist narrators. This discourse, however, shares the irreligious conclusions of the deist works. Middleton's work originates in Locke's rationalism and in Grotius' philosophy and proceeds also to embrace the deist position and Tindal's criticism of Christianity. The fact that he raises doubts about post-Evangelical miraculous powers and events is no less definitive than his exclusion of any supernatural intervention in

⁵⁴ Woolston expounds the interpretative method to which he was to remain faithful throughout the course of his six *Discourses on the miracles of our Saviour*, (London, 1727-1730), p. 4-5: "I. I will show, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his Divine Authority to found a Religion. II. That the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the Evangelists, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are only related as prophetic and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him. III. I shall consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Testimony and Witness of his Divine Authority, and show, that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*; of which those wrought in the *Flesh* are but mere Types and Shadows."

the course of history and his depreciation of Divine Revelation in the Christian religion.

In conclusion, from the brief mentions made of certain deists of the eighteenth century, it is evident that from this point on, within the specific field of investigation as to the existence of miracles and the legitimacy of prophecies in strict relation to Spinoza's thought, Spinoza's influence among those deist writers whose works spanned the middle of the eighteenth century, within the philosophical tendencies of the period, began to weaken and fade.

LOCKE AS SECRET 'SPINOZIST': THE PERSPECTIVE OF WILLIAM CARROLL

Stuart Brown

It is perhaps symbolic that 1689 was when the first English translation of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was published. For England was then undergoing something of a revolution which would result in much greater toleration and freedom of religious expression. At the time a Spinoza publication was in flagrant breach of the Licensing Laws. But the Laws themselves lapsed a few years later (in 1695) and the censorship of books was never re-introduced. Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* was published in 1695 and John Toland's *Christianity not Mysteriorious* the following year. Both books, like Spinoza's, shocked conservative Churchmen. Toland's book was burned in Ireland. But, although there were certainly those who would have liked to see Locke's and Toland's books suppressed in England, they were not. Heterodox books could still be burned and indeed this misfortune befell a book by another of Locke's followers.¹ The Blasphemy Act of 1698 also posed a threat to the outspoken. Nonetheless the formal constraints on the publication of heterodox works were in large measure lifted.

Between 1695 and 1715 there was a large output of heterodox writing and controversies between the Church parties reached a peak. The 'Latitudinarians' were free to express opinions which would generally be regarded as heretical. A well-known example was Samuel Clarke,² who challenged the biblical basis of the doc-

¹ *M. Le Clerc's Extract and Judgment of the Rights of the Christian Church asserted, etc. Trans from his Bibliothèque choisie...* (London, 1708). William Carroll may have been instrumental in persuading the House of Commons to order the book to be burned, together with two by Matthew Tindal. At all events he defended the action of Parliament in his controversy with Le Clerc. For some account of these events and this controversy, see my "Theological Politics' and the Reception of Spinoza in Early Enlightenment England", *Studia Spinozana* 9 (1994) (forthcoming).

² Samuel Clarke is now remembered particularly for his defence of Newton against Leibniz. But he was an important philosophical figure for at least the first half of the eighteenth century. Voltaire circulated the joke about him that he was the best

trine of the Trinity but nonetheless held on to his fashionable pulpit in Westminster. More extreme were the 'deists' such as Toland and Anthony Collins, both professed disciples of Locke.³ The Latitudinarians generally sought to distance themselves from the deists, though in this the ailing Locke was less successful. The High Church party, which lost power under William and Mary, blamed the Latitudinarians and the 'abused Toleration' for what they perceived as the decline of religion in England. They not merely blamed them for encouraging the deists but even accused some of being deists themselves.

Spinoza's name was often linked to deism⁴ and indeed he was taken to be the inspiration for its more extreme forms.⁵ Though deism might be little more than a demand for rational religion, in its more extreme forms it was mechanist and materialist in metaphysics, republican in politics and indeed subversive of Church and State authority alike.⁶ High Churchmen, who were strongly com-

qualified to become the next Archbishop of Canterbury except that he was "an atheist". Though that was an exaggeration, there was an attempt to have Clarke convicted of heresy in 1714. For an account of the theological controversies in which he became engaged, see J.P. Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke. An Eighteenth Century Heretic* (Kington, 1976).

³ Toland linked a Lockean empiricism with an explicit materialism and so helped to give currency to the materialist interpretation of Locke. He was partially responsible for Leibniz understanding Locke in this way. See Leibniz's letter to the Queen of Prussia on whether there is anything in our minds not derived from the senses and whether there is anything in nature that is not merely material. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875-1890; Hildesheim, 1978), 7 vols., VI, p. 449-508. Locke did not encourage Toland but favoured the more respectable Collins.

⁴ See for instance, Matthias Earbury, *Deism examin'd and confuted. In an answer to a book intituled Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (London, 1697). Earbury may have been influential in establishing a usage of 'deism' and 'Spinozism' in which they became virtually interchangeable. The term 'deism' is, however, a very confusing one during this period. See Robert R. Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy. A Study in Adaptations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

⁵ A likely prototype for such extreme deism is Charles Blount (1654-1693), author of *The Oracles of Reason* (London, 1693). Blount was probably responsible for the first (illicit) publication in English of extracts from the chapter on miracles from Spinoza's *Tractatus* which he interlarded in a curious way with quotations from Hobbes and from Thomas Burnet's heterodox *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (whom he interlarded elsewhere). Blount's conflation of Hobbes and Spinoza may have influenced the High Church opponents of deism, including William Carroll.

⁶ See Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment. Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London, 1981).

mitted to the authority of the clergy and often to censorship,⁷ were obvious enemies of the deists. In the 1690's they could write polemical tracts against deism, and many of them did, but they could not initiate stronger action. The accession of Queen Anne, herself of their persuasion, raised their hopes of greater power and during her reign (1702-1714) the campaign against deism became more aggressive. This is the period of activity of the self-appointed inquisitor of the secret Spinozists—England's *malleus Spinozorum*⁸—an Irish clergyman by the name of 'William Carroll'.

Little is known of Carroll except what may be gleaned from the six books of which he was the author. Three of them were published anonymously and three under his own name.⁹ They were all attacks on well-known Whig intellectuals—in particular, John Locke, Samuel Clarke, Anthony Collins, Matthew Tindal and Jean Le Clerc. The books were published in the space of six years (1705-1711). There are enough cross-references or repetitions between the anonymous works and those under Carroll's name to make it reasonable to

⁷ Carroll shows his approval of certain books being suppressed by his defence of the burning of the books by Tindal and Le Clerc. He could also write that "the *High and Mighty States-General*, have very *wisely* and *religiously Prohibited* Spinoza's *Works* in their *Dominions...*" (*Spinoza Reviv'd. Part the Second...* (London, 1711), p. 59). As to censorship strictly speaking he wrote as one willing to be subject to it, as is evident from the concluding sentence of his first book: "The Tenor of these Sheets is submitted to the Judgment of those, who have a Natural Right to Judge of Tracts of this kind." (*Remarks on Mr Clark's Sermons...* (London, 1705), p. 42.) The reference is to those who are ordained by God to make such judgments. The misleading phrase "Natural Right" I take to be an allusion to a right Carroll believed was really there even though it had been denied by the failure of the Whig administration to renew the Licensing Laws.

⁸ I intend some comparison with the *Malleus maleficarum*—a late fifteenth century book on witchcraft produced by the Dominicans Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, but not an exact parallel. Spinozism tended to be represented in England, from Henry More to Carroll, as a diabolical plot, with a full range of trickery and wiliness. Carroll behaves like an inquisitor, proving guilt and offering some promise of forgiveness for penitence, etc. See below.

⁹ The works written under his own name were: *A Dissertation upon the Tenth Chapter of the Fourth Book of Mr. Locke's Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London, 1706), *A Letter to the Reverend Dr Benjamin Prat [...] wherein the dangerous errors in a late book [by Anthony Collins], intituled, An Essay concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions [...] are detected, confuted...* (London, 1707) and *Spinoza Reviv'd. Part the Second...* The anonymous works are the two against Clarke; *Remarks on Mr Clark's Sermons...* (London, 1705), *The Scepticism and fundamental errors establish'd in Mr Samuel Clark's sermons [...] more fully discovered...* (London, 1706) and *Spinoza Reviv'd: or, a Treatise, proving the book, entitled, The Rights of the Christian Church &c [...] to be the same with Spinoza's Rights of the Christian Clergy* (London, 1709).

attribute all these books, as is usually done, to a single author. They have a distinctive polemical style and are all preoccupied with diagnosing and counteracting Spinozism. The longest and most important is the book against Locke, in which Carroll sought to substantiate the charge of Spinozism he repeated elsewhere.

Locke and Spinoza have been so long represented as diametrical opposites that scholars in the twentieth century have found it difficult to take Carroll's charge seriously. John Yolton¹⁰ has suggested that the book was "misdirected" and "ill-conceived" and would have applied the word "frivolous" were it not so "long and often tedious". But few are as aware as Yolton that Carroll's charges against Locke would not have sounded strange to many of his contemporaries. He himself concedes that "Carroll's main charge has more historical interest than it might have had, had it stood alone". He makes no attempt, however, to enter into Carroll's thought-world or to reconstruct the perspective from which Locke might have appeared as a 'Spinozist'. That is part of what I attempt to do in this paper.¹¹

Some contemporary scholars believe that Spinoza should be taken more seriously as an influence on Locke.¹² My purpose in this paper is not, however, to offer a better interpretation of Locke, but to understand better how some of his contemporaries might have taken him, even if wrongly, for a Spinozist. Since Locke is represented by Carroll as the chief mediator of Spinozism, the truth of the charges against his disciples is crucially dependent on the charge against Locke. I argue in what follows that the charge against Locke was false and that the 'Spinozism' attacked by the High Churchmen was in large measure their own construct. The attention here, therefore, is primarily on Carroll and on how Locke appeared to those who influenced him.

In the first section I piece together some account of Carroll's High Church connections and background. In the second I look at other High Church reactions to Locke. The third section describes some reactions of Oxford philosophers to Locke and seeks to represent Carroll's philosophical position in the light of those reactions.

¹⁰ In his brief Introduction to the Thoemmes reprint of Carroll's *Dissertation* (Bristol, 1990).

¹¹ Even if the perspective is a distorted one it was not peculiar to Carroll and I will argue that it was broadly in line with the interpretation of Locke that held sway in the eighteenth century.

¹² For instance, Wim Klever. See his contribution to this volume.

Attention is given in the fourth section to the case Carroll made out for interpreting Locke in the way he did. Finally I attempt to interpret the author of these attacks on alleged secret Spinozism and consider what may have become of him and his party after 1711.

CARROLL'S HIGH CHURCH CONNECTIONS

In a later work¹³ Carroll added an appendix in which he accused Jean Le Clerc of Spinozism. Although Carroll had written anonymously, Le Clerc knew that his assailant was a "Mr. Carol" (sic). In his reply he claimed that Carroll was "an Irish Priest converted by Mr. Hickes".¹⁴ He also insinuated that, like George Hickes, Carroll was a "Non-juror", i.e. one of those who had refused the oath of allegiance to William and Mary and had therefore lost his living. Carroll vehemently denied being a Non-juror¹⁵ but he was happy to use the phrase "Hickes's Irishman"¹⁶ of himself. Both the denial and the admission are confirmed elsewhere. Carroll praises Queen Anne as the finest monarch who ever lived and is centrally concerned in *Spinoza Reviv'd. Part the Second* to defend the prerogatives of Crown and Parliament in matters of religion. In the earlier *Spinoza Reviv'd* he had allowed Hickes a lengthy and upstaging preliminary discourse, showing a degree of deference that implied a master-disciple relationship.

Carroll was strongly of the same High Church religious persuasion as Hickes¹⁷ and he did not deny that he had been "converted" by him.¹⁸ If he was indeed a convert, it may further be conjectured¹⁹

¹³ *Spinoza Reviv'd*. Le Clerc had, however, already been branded a Spinozist by Carroll in his first book against Clarke.

¹⁴ Le Clerc, Jean: *The Rights of the Christian Church Adjusted, Being the Extract and Judgment of M. LE CLERC upon those AUTHORS who have written against [The Book Intituled] The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, etc VIZ Dr. Hickes, Dr. Turner, Mr. Wotton, Mr Hill, Mr Carol [sic], Mr Oldsworth...* (London, 1711), p. 30.

¹⁵ "As to my being a Non-Juror, 'tis publicly known, that I neither am nor ever was so". *Spinoza Reviv'd. Part the Second*, p. 26.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47, 58.

¹⁷ Carroll's Churchmanship is evident from the fact that, defending the clergy against the charge that they are all bad, he cites as a paragon of virtue a Savoyard refugee in England, De la Mothe le Grand, whom he describes as "an Ornament to his Order". He added that he was a credit to his "Christian Protectors", "the Defenders of the truly Catholick Faith". *Dissertation*, p. 181 and 280.

¹⁸ As to what he might have converted from, the best guess is Catholicism, part-

that the connection between the two went back before 1690, when Hickes had been forced to give up his Deanery in Worcester and lost his place in the Anglican hierarchy. Carroll made it clear that he pitied Hickes's case though he did not agree with his action.²⁰ That would not have been an unusual attitude. Hickes's position was respected by many who did not agree with the refusal to take the oaths of loyalty.

It seems that Carroll himself had taken the oaths of allegiance to secure some appointment, which is how it would have been publicly known that he was not a Non-juror. Although he only called himself "Hickes's Irishman" and not, as Le Clerc had done, "his Irish Priest", his clerical status is implied on the title page of his last book. He there claims to be writing on behalf of "the Learned and Reverend Persons that wrote against the Seditious and Atheistical Principles" of Le Clerc. These persons were, first and foremost, Hickes and himself, who indeed were the only ones, according to Carroll,²¹ to accuse Le Clerc of "Spinozism".

Carroll was, in sum, an Irish High Church clergyman who, although himself a royalist, had at least some sympathy for the Non-jurors. In using the term "learned" of himself he was indicating academic connections and pretensions. His known academic connections were all with Oxford—a High Church stronghold. Indeed, as J.H. Overton pointed out, "Oxford was not only a nursery for Jacobites and Nonjurors, but also a place in which for several rea-

ly because a number of other Carrolls at that time were Irish Catholic priests, and partly because that was an easy and intelligible conversion at that time. Anglican High Churchmen like Hickes wanted to return the Church of England to a state in which it had been (much closer to the Roman Catholic liturgy, for instance, with 'priests' rather than 'ministers') prior to Calvinistic 'reforms'. The big issue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics was over the status of the Pope. A 'conversion' to the Anglican communion was of course made tempting by the discrimination against Catholics.

¹⁹ It seems improbable that, after the Non-juring trauma, Hickes would have been acquiring disciples and converts, rather than admirers, who disagreed with him about the action for which he was best known.

²⁰ "As for his being a *Non-juror*, I pity his Case, and wish he were not so..." *Dissertation*, p. 20.

²¹ "...there is none but the Reverend Dr. *Hickes*, in his Preface to his *Christian Priesthood*, and in that to *Spinoza Reviv'd*, and I throughout, and especially in the Appendix to that little Treatise, who has professedly taken your *Extract*, and other Principles, to task, and charg'd both them and the *Rights* [of Tindal] with *Spinozism*..." *Spinoza Reviv'd. Part the Second*, p. 2.

sons they would be inclined to linger".²² Hickee, as a former don himself and the leading light among the Non-jurors, would have had no difficulty finding a welcome there and is known to have been a frequent visitor.

It is not clear exactly what Carroll's connection with Oxford was. He seems neither to have matriculated nor graduated. Yet, as I will seek to bring out, his work bears the mark of an Oxford education and he had good connections in the University. He had enjoyed the patronage of James, 2nd Duke of Ormonde in the Irish Peerage. Carroll's book against Locke was dedicated to the Duke and publicly recorded his gratitude for "a long Train of Favours [...] for above these seven years past".²³ He does not declare what these favours had been. But the Duke had been Chancellor of Oxford since 1688 and could have used his influence to secure a minor chaplaincy or in some other way helped to provide Carroll with the means of support. The Duke may have come to know about Carroll through his own Chaplain, Benjamin Pratt (1669-1721).²⁴ Pratt, another Irishman and perhaps a rough contemporary of Carroll, was a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and had been elevated to a Chair in 1704. But he was a frequent visitor to England, including Oxford. Oxford was the likely venue in 1707 for a discussion to which Carroll refers,²⁵ between Pratt, himself and the High Church Chaplain of Christ Church, Ernest Grabe.²⁶

Amongst Carroll's acquaintances at Oxford was the Principal of Jesus College and a former Vice Chancellor (1689-91), Dr. Jonathan Edwards, who shared his concern with the heretical tendencies of the Latitudinarians and who had written a book against Socinia-

²² *The Nonjurors* (Oxford, 1902), p. 179 ff.

²³ *Dissertation*, Dedication.

²⁴ Some account of Pratt is given in R.B. McDowell & D.A. Webb, *Trinity College Dublin: 1592-1952. An Academic History* (Cambridge, 1982), though the emphasis is on his Tory politics and no mention is made of his Churchmanship. He rose to being Provost of Trinity from 1710 till 1717, when he was "hustled out into a mere deanery" by his Whig opponents. McDowell & Webb, *Trinity College Dublin*, p. 36.

²⁵ Carroll, in his *Letter to the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Pratt*, does not mention where the discussion took place. The participants had discussed Anthony Collins' *Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions* and their hostility to it seems to have fired Carroll to make his attack on Collins.

²⁶ Grabe was the "Friend"—see note 25—who took part in the conversation with Dr. Edwards. He is referred to elsewhere in Carroll's writings. Grabe, like Carroll, had been converted to a High Church Anglicanism. See the article on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

nism.²⁷ Carroll seems to have cultivated the Oxford authorities and it is likely that he sought some kind of advancement for himself through proving his soundness as an opponent of deism and Spinozism. At the end of the piece against Collins, for instance, Carroll writes that "since the Reverend Dr. Lancaster, Vice Chancellor of Oxford, has been pleas'd to recommend the *Dissertation*, on that *Chapter* [of Locke's *Essay*], in his Speech to the University, as an *Antidote* against Mr. L's Book, and a *Key* to understand it; I here publicly return him my humble thanks..."²⁸ What Dr. Lancaster was to be thanked for, presumably, was some benefit to Carroll from his commendation. It might have been to enhance his eligibility for some kind of position, or a better position, at the University. Though this is only a speculation, it is made more plausible by the preoccupation of some senior members of the University with the supposedly bad influence of Locke and Le Clerc. Carroll clearly knew of this from the inside and indeed his own obsession with the sinister influence of Locke and Le Clerc could well have been an Oxford influence on him.

CONSERVATIVE REACTIONS TO LOCKE: 'SPINOZA-DEISM'

George Hickes, as we have already seen, was a major influence on Carroll and may well have encouraged in him many of the prejudices against Locke with which Carroll's writings are imbued. Hickes had been an Oxford don until 1680 and, if he did not know Locke personally, he would certainly have known of him. Hickes was then on the side of the High Church Restoration establishment and would have taken a highly unfavourable view of Locke's clandestine activities.²⁹ Locke's disappearance to the Netherlands after the Rye House Plot of 1683 would have confirmed the suspicion that he was a subversive and have begun the rumours of his association with Spinozists, republicans and free-thinkers.

²⁷ Edwards was the author of *A Preservative against Socinianism* (Oxford, 1693-1703). Carroll reported, in a postscript to his "letter" to Prat, on "a short Conversation our Friend [Dr. Grabe] and I had last week, with the Reverend Dr. Edwards at Oxford". *Letter to the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Prat*, p. 23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁹ See Richard Ashcraft's *Revolutionary Politics & Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, (Princeton, 1986), ch. 8.

As the Prince of Orange made his barely contested and popular invasion in 1688, Locke revised and made plans to publish his *Two Treatises of Government*. He expressed the hope that they would be 'sufficient to establish the Throne of our Great Restorer, Our present King William; to make good his Title, in the Consent of the People...'³⁰ After so nailing his colours to the mast it may seem strange that he was still thought to be secretly republican. But the first treatise appeared to deny the Biblical basis for an inherited throne and the second to legitimise only an elective monarchy, based on consent. Locke and other more radical Whigs were rightly thought to want to reduce the powers of the monarchy considerably. And, from the point of view of more conservative adherents of an inherited monarchy 'established by Scripture', this would be to weaken the institution to the point of ineffectiveness and so in practice to bring about a republic. Locke was, by whatever train of reasoning, taken to be plotting to bring about a republic.

This republican reputation lasted into the eighteenth century, when an anonymous author undertook to refute his "republican schemes".³¹ This author regarded Locke as one of many who were seeking to undermine the authority of the State by giving it a secular basis in the consent of the people rather than a religious basis in the Bible. Locke was thus being associated also with the deists who sought to undermine the authority of the Church—which, the author assumed, also had a Scriptural basis. From a conservative point of view the defence of the Monarchy and of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were bound up with one another. Thus the author began his polemics in these terms:

It has of late been wonderful to observe the Atheists, the Deists, Fanaticks, and the Spawn of Jesuits, under the prolick influence of an abus'd Toleration, crawling forth like Locusts, first to darken, and then to devour the land. These continual attempts have been with a double *entendre*, to subvert the State through the ruin of the Church; or, convertibly, the Hierarch of the Church through the Monarchy of the State. And, to make Root and Branch work with both, they have

³⁰ Preface to 1690 edition. It has been shown by Peter Laslett, in his introduction to the critical edition (Cambridge, 1963), that Locke did not, contrary to common belief, write these treatises specially for this purpose but had largely composed them earlier.

³¹ *An Essay upon Government wherein the Republican Schemes Reviv'd by Mr Locke, Dr. Blackal etc are Fairly Consider'd and Refuted* (London, 1705).

now again boldly denied to either an Establishment by the Word of God...³²

Political and religious radicalism had been long interconnected in English 'theological politics'.³³ Republicanism was associated with 'deism' and therefore 'atheism' in a common but confusing sense of the time, i.e. disbelief in the only true god, viz. the god of the Bible.³⁴ The increasing trend towards 'deism' was associated with the worst tendencies of the 'new philosophy', which allegedly encouraged a mechanistic materialism. Although Decartes himself had for some time been taken as a mechanist and an enemy of religion, by the 1690's he had been rehabilitated as a defender of the faith. His dualism of body and mind, and the attendant *a priori* demonstration of immortality, came to be regarded as a bulwark against materialism. The chief bogeys among the 'new' philosophers were Hobbes and Spinoza. Locke also came to be regarded as a threat, partly in consequence of the prominence that the Stillingfleet controversy³⁵ gave to his remarks about God being able to endow matter with the power of thought.³⁶ An interpretation of Locke's *Essay* as a work of

³² *Ibid.*, Preface.

³³ I do not attempt to argue this again here, as it is one of my main points in "Theological Politics' and the Reception of Spinoza in Early Enlightenment England".

³⁴ A bill "for punishing and suppressing atheism" had been proposed in 1677, which specifies the offence as that of denying or deriding "the essence, persons, or attributes of God the Father, Son or Holy Ghost given in the Scriptures, or the omnipotency, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness, or providence of God in the creation..." (quoted from David Berman's *A History of Atheism in Britain. From Hobbes to Russell* (London, 1988), p. 48 ff.). Jews and Muslims would have counted as 'atheists' according to that definition.

³⁵ See the paper by Sarah Hutton elsewhere in this volume. See also R.H. Popkin, "The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971), p. 303-19, and R.T. Carroll, *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet: 1635-1699* (The Hague, 1975). Stillingfleet's interpretation of Locke seems to have been widely influential in his day.

³⁶ The possibility of 'thinking matter' is obscurely introduced in the *Essay*, the main discussion occurring appropriately in Book IV, Chapter III, "Of the Extent of Human Knowledge"—appropriately, because Locke's point was that it is impossible for us through the contemplation of our ideas to determine whether God has given the power of thought to "some systems of matter". Locke was running counter to the Cartesian claim that we can know the essential difference between body and mind through our ideas of them and so was committed to rejecting the *a priori* argument for immortality. His scepticism on this point only removes an objection to materialism and is not, as his critics supposed, an attempt to instate it.

materialism³⁷ and perhaps even Spinozism was thus put into circulation.

Hickes, although a scholar of some distinction,³⁸ seems not to have been very diligent as a student of philosophy. The 'Spinoza-Deism' which he attacks in his preliminary discourse to *Spinoza Reviv'd* seems to be a curious amalgam in which Hobbist materialism is to the fore but combined with anti-clericalism. One anonymous author³⁹ from whom he partly derived this amalgam produced a set of "principles of deism" which, in addition to opposition to the clergy, the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed, was strongly materialist, including these tenets:

Thinking, or Human Consciousness, is a Mode of Matter, which all parts of Matter may be supposed capable of producing [...]
Thought is a Species of Motion.
All our Habits and Actions are Corporeal.
Consciousness is a Quality as much inhering in Matter, as the Motion of a Clock does in the parts of the Clock...

Hickes found no difficulty in the suggestion that Locke was a secret 'Spinoza-Deist'. Locke's reputation for secrecy was well-established. He claimed to be an 'original' but Hickes thought he was being insincere. For instance, he claimed, the arguments against innate ideas were wholly derivative:

...there is scarce one Argument in it [Locke's *Essay*] against Innate Ideas, which he had not heard, or read in the University, upon the trite Question, commonly disputed in the *Schools*, *An dantur innatae ideae?*⁴⁰

Even supposing this interesting claim were true, Hickes (and, as we will see, Carroll) was wrong in supposing that Locke, in not acknowledging sources, was pretending not to have intellectual debts. And even if he had been, it would only follow that he was

³⁷ Stillingfleet seems to have been the first to have seen how a scepticism about the nature of substances, such as Locke was committed to, leaves the way open for a pantheistic materialism. As we will see below, Carroll did not believe Locke when he protested that it would be fanciful to understand him in that way.

³⁸ Hickes's important scholarly work was his *Thesaurus* of northern tongues (1703-1705), which opened the way to linguistic and historical study of Anglo-Saxon times.

³⁹ *Some Considerations concerning the Trinity* (London, 1701).

⁴⁰ Hickes's lengthy Preliminary Discourse to *Spinoza Reviv'd*, where this claim is made, is unpaginated.

derivative in some respects, not that he was wholly derivative and not an 'original' at all. The reputation for secrecy and the suspicion of being derivative, combined with interpretation of the *Essay* as materialist, made the far-fetched allegation of Spinozism plausible to Hickes and some other conservatives, including William Carroll.

Locke denied that he was a republican, an atheist, a materialist, a sceptic or a Spinozist. But he was taken by many to be leaning in those directions. That was the way in which his thought was developed by many of his admirers in the French Enlightenment.⁴¹ That was also how he was already being taken by some of his younger disciples. Locke enjoyed considerable prestige amongst the more radical Whigs and deists. His ideas were taken up by both Toland and Collins and pushed in a more radical direction than he himself had been inclined to develop them. Locke himself did not explicitly endorse either a materialist or a republican position. But that was where he was thought to be crafty. What was implicit in Locke was, these critics claimed, only being made explicit by his followers.⁴²

Locke was apparently warned by the anti-deist Francis Gastrell that he was highly regarded and much quoted by "the Socinians, deists, Atheists, and the freethinkers of this country" and that he ought to take steps to disavow them.⁴³ He seems not to have been strenuous enough in dissociating himself from radicals and indeed made Collins one of his executors. This may be a further reason why religious and political conservatives took him to be more radical than he was or, at any rate, wished to appear.

A case can be made for thinking that Locke *was* more radical in his politics⁴⁴ than he wished to appear in his later years and than subsequent political philosophers have wanted to believe. But no case has been made for supposing that he was not sincere in his religious belief. He may have been heterodox, a mortalist or Socinian, but he sought to accept what he took to be a biblical Christianity.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford, 1991).

⁴² See John W. Yolton, *Thinking Matter. Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1983).

⁴³ Gastrell's advice was quoted by Thomas Burnet in a letter to Leibniz. See Nicolas Jolley, *Leibniz and Locke* (Oxford, 1984), p. 44. Leibniz studied the Stillingfleet controversy, had discussions with Toland and interpreted Locke's *Essay* accordingly as a work of materialism.

⁴⁴ See Ashcraft's *Revolutionary Politics*.

⁴⁵ The Clarendon Edition of the complete works already includes the two volume *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*, ed. A.W. Wainwright.

He was not a deist. His *Essay* was a difficult book which defended a complicated philosophical position which was widely, indeed almost universally, misunderstood except by those who knew him well. Rightly or wrongly, his book was taken to have implications that were not at all in his mind. Whether simplistically or whether by thinking through his philosophy more rigorously, others took it to imply materialism. On this his disciples and critics agreed and this was the view that dominated Locke interpretation in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶

THE OXFORD CONTEXT

The 1690s were years of considerable change for philosophy at Oxford. Modern philosophy was making an impact, though the students seem to have been more interested in it than some of those who were responsible for their education. The young Joseph Addison, Thomas Taylor⁴⁷ and another Magdalen student delivered Latin orations in 1693 in which they defended the 'new philosophy'.⁴⁸ By the turn of the century, at least, there seems to have been a considerable student interest in Locke's *Essay* and certain writings of Jean Le Clerc. The student attention to these books was a cause for concern amongst the Heads of 'Houses', who were asked in 1703 to consider banning students from reading any of the books by Locke and Le Clerc. They were, however, dissuaded on pragmatic grounds not to issue a "programma" against the books. Such an action, it was argued, would make "much noise abroad" and would, in any case, be more likely to increase the desire of the young men to read the forbidden books than to reduce it.⁴⁹ They agreed instead "to admonish their tutors not to read to their pupils or to suffer their

⁴⁶ Yolton's writings, particularly the books mentioned above, provide evidence of this. The evidence of Locke's Biblical Christianity is evident from his unpublished writings.

⁴⁷ Thomas Taylor (1669-1735), possibly under the influence of John Norris, became a Malebranchean and produced a translation of the *Recherche de la Vérité, Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce* and other writings as well as producing some pieces of Malebranchean philosophical theology on his own account.

⁴⁸ *Oratio. Nova philosophia veteri praeferenda est*. The text of Addison's lecture survived and was published in English and Latin in a collection of miscellanies, *The Altar of Love* (London, 1727).

⁴⁹ B.L. MSS. Locke c. 22, f. 167, quoted from Maurice Cranston, *John Locke. A Biography* (London, 1957), p. 468.

pupils to read any of those books".⁵⁰ As narrated to Locke by his friend Tyrrell, however, the affair "ended only in a secret agreement among some of them that the tutors [...] be advised neither to read your Essay nor Le Clerc's Physics nor Logic to their pupils, since those works much discouraged the noble art of disputation".⁵¹ Even this, Tyrrell went on to assure him, seems not to have been done in the case of at least four of the Colleges which had High Church Heads.

Apparently the "new philosophy" was being so much read that it was leading to "a great decay of logical exercises in the University". At one level, the complaint seems to be based not upon any desire to inculcate doctrines but upon a perception, no doubt outmoded from a "modern" point of view, of what students needed for a good education. But the practice of disputation, which Aristotle had recommended, through which students learned to argue syllogistically, was linked to other Aristotelian ideals of *scientia* and demonstration.⁵² To abandon such ideals was thought to mean casting oneself adrift from any safe anchor and to risk floundering in the sea of scepticism. One of the books written as an antidote to Locke's *Essay* was called *Anti-Scepticism*.⁵³ The Reverend Henry Lee wrote this book, as he told his readers, when his sons were up at Oxford and were exposed to the influence of the *Essay*. Hickes thought Lee's book was an effective refutation of the "deists" and challenged them to reply to its arguments.⁵⁴

Carroll was strongly influenced by this perception of Locke as a

⁵⁰ Letter from William Wright, B.L. MSS. Locke c. 23, f. 109, quoted in Cranston, *John Locke*, p. 466.

⁵¹ B.L. MSS. Locke, c. 22, f. 167, Cranston, *John Locke*, p. 468.

⁵² The ideal of *scientia* was taken up in a positive way by those 'modern' philosophers commonly labelled as 'rationalists', such as Descartes and Spinoza, though they substituted geometrical for syllogistic reasoning. Locke actually followed them in allowing *a priori* demonstration of ethical truths and of the existence of God. But he conspicuously did not accept the conventional *a priori* argument for immortality based upon the simplicity of the soul. He also rejected such argumentations in scientific matters. To the (considerable) extent that he was an empiricist he appeared to those who accepted the ideal of *scientia* to be a sceptic. See R.S. Woolhouse, *Locke* (Brighton, 1983).

⁵³ The full title is *Anti-scepticism: or notes upon each chapter of Mr. Lock's Essay* (London, 1702).

⁵⁴ In his preliminary discourse to *Spinoza Reviv'd*, Hickes wrote: "Let our *Deists*, or *Scepticks*, any of them answer Mr *Lee*, if they can, or let them get their *French Champion*, Mr. Le Clerc, to Answer him for them..."

sceptic. His books purport, by contrast, to appreciate and offer demonstrations.⁵⁵ While he claimed to be of no particular philosophical "sect",⁵⁶ his sympathies were with the Cartesians. He accepted not only innate ideas⁵⁷ but also the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and body, which he praised "the *Incomparable Mr. Norris*", in company with "all truly Learned and Reasonable Men",⁵⁸ for embracing. In the face of Locke's scepticism about whether we could know the essence of substance, Carroll clung to the Cartesian certainties:

Descartes as his Followers have asserted, and *Mathematically proved*, That the *Essence* of *Matter* consists in *Length, Breadth, and Depth*. That no extended Substance can think, nor any thinking Substance be extended. That Extension and Thinking are Attributes of two substances, *Originally and Eternally*, different and distinct from one another. *Spinoza*, who would have [...] but one single Substance, runs counter to his Master...⁵⁹

These quotations already indicate that Carroll was not an original philosopher. To compare him with two other High Church Oxford Cartesians, he was not of the calibre of Arthur Collier,⁶⁰ still less of Norris. Nonetheless his was, like their's, a clearly anti-empiricist, anti-sceptical and anti-materialist position. Unlike them, however, he had clearly devoted a good deal of time to the study of Spinoza. Carroll was a competent linguist and made his own translations of Spinoza⁶¹ and Pufendorf⁶² from the Latin and of Malebranche⁶³

⁵⁵ He refers, for instance, to various demonstrations given by the Cartesians. See Note 57 below. He himself also offered geometric demonstrations. On the title-page of his *Remarks on Mr. Clarke's Sermons*, for instance, he advertises that he is going to demonstrate his main claims geometrically, e.g. that Clarke could not on his own terms prove the existence of God. A similarly large claim is made for the reasonings of *Spinoza Reviv'd*. Carroll's actual method might be better described as analysing what he takes to be the presuppositions of his opponent's arguments and bringing out their implications. He nowhere offers even a semblance of a geometrical proof.

⁵⁶ "I humbly desire the Reader to be persuaded, that I am of no particular *Sect* in *Matters of Philosophy*, that I am only of the Party of *Truth*..." *Remarks on Mr. Clark's Sermons*, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Against Locke, for instance, he insists: "The *Cartesians* have *demonstrated* that we have [...] an *Original Innate Idea of God*..." *Remarks on Mr. Clark's Sermons*, p. 16.

⁵⁸ *Dissertation*, p. 264.

⁵⁹ *Remarks on Mr. Clark's Sermons*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Arthur Collier (1680-1732) was a follower of Malebranche and Norris. Unlike Norris, however, he was not a critic of Locke. His *Clavis Universalis* (London, 1713) defended a form of immaterialism otherwise similar to that of Berkeley.

⁶¹ Both the *Remarks* and the *Demonstration* contain extensive quotations from Spinoza.

from the French originals. But his quality as a rigorous thinker left much to be desired. He was too concerned to arrive at a particular conclusion and too willing to resort to doubtful tactics to insinuate it. Thus he seized upon that part of Locke's controversy with Stillingfleet where the Bishop has introduced the name of Spinoza and suggested that perhaps Locke did not really believe there was a principle above matter in the world. Locke expressed his exasperation with such a misinterpretation in these words:

It requires some Skill for anyone to represent me as your Lordship does here, as one *ignorant* or *doubtful* whether *Matter* may not *think*, to that Degree, that I am not *certain*, or do not believe that there is a principle above Matter and Motion in the World, and consequently all revelation may be nothing but the effects of an exalted fancy, or the heats of a disordered imagination, as Spinoza affirmed.⁶⁴

Carroll quoted this passage, capping it with his own response: "Never was any Man more exactly Represented than by that Great Prelate. This can be Mathematically demonstrated..."⁶⁵ But, as I will bring out further in the next section, Locke's philosophical position is not after all so different from Carroll's. He did believe in a transcendent immaterial god and he did believe in mental substances.⁶⁶ He was right to protest that Stillingfleet's interpretation was fanciful. It is one thing to admit that it is in some sense possible for matter to think. It is quite another to believe that any parcel of matter ever does, did or will do. It is still a huge further step to believe that everything that thinks is material.

Similar *lacunae* seem to occur systematically in Carroll's writings. He complained, for instance, that in Clarke's Boyle Lectures "...there is not one Argument offer'd, to prove against *Spinoza*, that

⁶² In *Spinoza Reviv'd. Part the Second*.

⁶³ Carroll accuses Locke of plagiarising Malebranche in order to add credibility to the charge that he also derived philosophical ideas from Spinoza. He quotes from the *Recherche de la Vérité*, with parallel translations in the *Disertation*, p. 286 ff.

⁶⁴ *Mr. Locke's Reply to the [...] Bishop of Worcester's Answer to his Second Letter...* (London, 1699), p. 151.

⁶⁵ *Remarks*, p. 42.

⁶⁶ See John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), Book II, Ch. XXIII, Section 27, where Locke is at pains to argue that "*the idea which belongs to spirit is at least as clear as that that belongs to body*". This conclusion could be, and of course was, taken in a double-edged way and encouraged Stillingfleet to construe Locke as a sceptic about substances. But Locke denied this. In the same section he affirms that God is a "pure spirit".

God is a *spirit*..."⁶⁷ and presents this fault as evidence of a tendency to Spinozism which, he claimed, was due to the bad influence of Locke on Clarke.⁶⁸ Once again it seems obvious enough that failure to demonstrate the falsity of a position (here, that God *is* material) cannot be enough to convict someone of believing it to be true. Carroll proceeds as if someone can be taken to be a materialist if they cannot prove they are not. It could be⁶⁹ that Carroll believed something like this: that the new philosophy has a tendency to 'materialism' rather as Platonism (when Christianised) has a tendency to certain heresies (Gnosticism, etc.) This is, of course, a theological kind of reasoning. But Carroll's point may have been that the onus of proof lay with Modern philosophers (who professed to be Christians, as Locke, Clarke, and so on did) to distance themselves, as the Cartesians had succeeded in doing, from materialism. That assumes a particular expectation of philosophy—that it delivers certainties—and does not allow "fideism" as a way of resolving difficulties⁷⁰ Carroll was not, of course, unusual in his expectations of philosophy. His original contribution, if it can be called that, was to conceive of Spinozism as the heresy to which Modern philosophy tended. This might be unintended, as he supposes it to have been in the case of Clarke. But it might be fully intended, as he claimed in the case of Locke.⁷¹ Such a claim calls for a more direct argument and this is what we might hope to find in his *Dissertation*.

CARROLL'S ATTACK ON LOCKE

Carroll published his *Dissertation upon the Tenth Chapter of the Fourth Book of Mr Locke's Essay* under his own name. In fact he had written

⁶⁷ *Remarks*, p. 41.

⁶⁸ "Tis likely he has been imposed upon by Mr. L's Sophisms and Equivocations." *Remarks*, p. 42.

⁶⁹ Other possible interpretations are considered below.

⁷⁰ In this respect Carroll begs the question against Locke, who was content (as his epistemology required) to rest many matters on faith that other philosophers were anxious to have demonstrated.

⁷¹ "Mr L. perceiving what Reception Spinoza's Hypothesis met with in the World, from Men of all Persuasions; and yet intending to spread and fit it in Mens Minds, spar'd no Cost or Labour to usher it into the World a second time, disguis'd and set off with all the Care, Precautions and Advantages he could think of..." *Dissertation*, p. 274.

nearly all of it, so he told his readers,⁷² before Locke died in 1704. In this book he charges Locke with teaching "*Spinoza's Doctrine*" throughout the *Essay* but of "finally and completely" establishing Spinoza's "Hypothesis" in the chapter entitled "Of Our Knowledge of the Existence of a God". The hypothesis in question is "the *Eternal Existence* of one only Cogitative and Extended Material Substance, differently modified in the whole World, that is, the *Eternal Existence* of the whole World itself..."⁷³

Locke does indeed discuss the hypothesis that God is material in sections 13 ff. of Book IV, Ch. 10 and spends several pages discussing it. At the same time it is a supposition or hypothesis he takes to be full of "Absurdities and Impossibilities". Indeed it is not even introduced until Locke has arrived at the conclusion of his chapter, namely that we do know that there must exist an eternal Mind who is omniscient and on whom all the pieces of this universe depend.⁷⁴ It is a very strange construction of a text to suppose that when a hypothesis is introduced in order to see "what Doubts can be raised" against the conclusion, that hypothesis itself can be taken as what is being advanced.⁷⁵ Once again it seems that Carroll's suspicions about Locke's 'Spinozism' had already firmed into convictions. Having, it seems, already made up his mind, he imposes his interpretation without any proper inquiry into Locke's actual intentions.

Locke's views about God involved what one might call a 'cosmic dualism' corresponding to his Cartesian dualism of mental and corporeal substance. The eternal Mind, according to him (and many others of course), created ephemeral matter *ex nihilo*. God has the power to act on the physical world just as the mind has the power to act on the body, though we cannot understand either process. The mind body relation is beyond our comprehension: "Make it intelligible", Locke wrote, "and then the next step will be to understand creation".⁷⁶ Locke's modesty about human understanding was habit-

⁷² On p. 274 he indicates that up to that point was all he intended to publish before Locke's death. His further "Observations" occupy fewer than 20 pages but already indicate his opposition to Le Clerc and Tindal.

⁷³ *Dissertation*, Preface to the Reader.

⁷⁴ *Essay*, Book IV, Ch. X, Sect. 12.

⁷⁵ Locke's willingness to give careful consideration to views he was not inclined to hold and to make concessions to them for the sake of argument may have been enough of a novelty to encourage misunderstanding of his own position.

⁷⁶ *Essay*, Book II, Ch. IV, Sect. 19.

ually misunderstood by his dogmatic contemporaries. Unlike them (and unlike Spinoza also), he had real doubts about the claims of reason in matters of metaphysics and religion. His purpose in writing the *Essay* was partly to set the limits to such claims.⁷⁷ In doing so he was not seeking to prepare the way for unbelief and materialism, as was commonly alleged, but to make room for faith.

As to Spinoza's influence on Locke, he certainly possessed copies of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and of the *Opera Posthuma*. But there is no reason to doubt that he was being truthful when he told a correspondent that he was "not so well versed in Hobbes and Spinoza".⁷⁸ He would, of course, have been involved in discussions of Spinoza's thought in the relatively freethinking atmosphere of the clubs with which he was involved, both in Rotterdam and in London. The question whether God is material was the kind of question that could have been discussed in such a context. No reason has been given, by Carroll or by anyone else, so far as I know, for supposing that we should not take his rejection of the materiality of God as genuine and as based on the reasons he gave.

CARROLL AND SECRET 'SPINOZISM'

Carroll's obsession with secret 'Spinozism' and the zeal with which he pursued all hints of it throw an oblique light on the inquisitor and his times. Though he was not alone in spreading rumours of 'secret Spinozism' in early eighteenth century England, he yielded to none in the study of Spinoza himself and in the detailed accusations he

⁷⁷ In the *Epistle to the Reader* with which Locke prefaced the Second Edition of the *Essay* he offered some account of how it came to be written: "...five or six Friends meeting at my Chamber, and discoursing on a Subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the Difficulties that rose on every side. After we had a while puzzled our selves, without coming any nearer a Resolution of those Doubts which perplexed us, it came into my Thoughts, that we took a wrong course; and that before we set our selves upon Enquiries of that Nature, it was necessary to examine our own Abilities, and see what Objects our Understandings were, or were not fitted to deal with." (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 7.) This proposal gave rise to further discussions and eventually to the *Essay*. It is not known exactly what the initial topic of discussion was, though it is likely to have been broadly to do with religion. Arguments over immortality or over whether matter can think are amongst those where, for reasons given in the *Essay*, people find themselves "quickly at a stand".

⁷⁸ *Works* IV, p. 477.

made. These are largely unfounded⁷⁹ if his case against Locke cannot be substantiated. And this would encourage the conclusion that there probably were no secret Spinozists⁸⁰ in England at that time, at any rate amongst those who ventured into print. It seems that the then loose usage of the term 'Spinozism' has encouraged historians to exaggerate Spinoza's influence.⁸¹ There was, of course, Toland,⁸² though Carroll's charge against him was based on his association with Locke rather than on his later overt pantheism.

Ironically, if anyone is a candidate for being a secret Spinozist at this time, it is Carroll himself. Unlike Locke and others, he clearly spent a lot of time reading Spinoza and no one else in England who wrote during this period had Spinoza so much on his mind. He was vehemently antagonistic in his polemics and pitted Cartesian certainties against Spinozistic materialism. But the obsession and the exaggerated opposition might represent a struggle in Carroll against a tendency to Spinozism within himself. This should be admitted as a possibility, if we allow that people can be all the more violently hostile to what they take as manifestations of evils they find it hard to control within themselves. Carroll's 'Spinozism', if this interpretation is correct, was not only hidden from others but even from himself. It would be different in kind from what he alleged in Locke. It would be a 'suppressed Spinozism'.

The major piece of evidence against this interpretation is that Cartesianism was found credible by many as a bulwark against materialism and the interpretation would require us to say that he

⁷⁹ The cases against Clarke, Collins and Le Clerc, at any rate, depend upon their connection to Locke. In the case of Tindal the problem is different. His *Rights of the Christian Church Asserted* (London, 1706), which Carroll attacked in *Spinoza Reviv'd*, was thought to have been derived from a work falsely attributed to Spinoza at this time, entitled *De jure ecclesiasticorum*.

⁸⁰ I do not think there were overt Spinozists in England either. Toland certainly owed some debt to Spinoza but probably more to Giordano Bruno, as Robert R. Sullivan has shown. See his *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*.

⁸¹ This is true of Rosalie Colie's "Spinoza and the Early English Deists", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), p. 23-46. Many of the contemporary allegations of 'Spinozism' were made by High Church critics. Colie attaches too much credence to these allegations. Her paper has nonetheless not been surpassed as an introduction to the reception of Spinoza in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

⁸² It seems at first sight puzzling that Carroll should not have seized upon Toland. Toland was, however, not influential in the way that Locke and Le Clerc were and so was of less concern to those worried about the spread of Spinozism.

was not really a convinced Cartesian. But a 'plus' of the interpretation is that it makes sense of his assumption that one could take Locke to be a materialist unless Locke could prove he was not. For perhaps Carroll believed there was a presumption of materialism, i.e. he himself was strongly inclined to believe it to be true. What Locke did, at least with his admission of the possibility of thinking matter, was to put the Cartesian certainties in doubt.

It may be that not enough is known about Carroll to determine which of several explanations for his attacks on Locke is the most plausible. It may be that there was something fundamentally irrational about those attacks. Carroll was clearly a complex character in whom sincere convictions were probably confused by personal uncertainties and ambitions. I have already suggested that he may have sought to advance himself in Oxford as a champion of the High Church party and particularly as the *malleus Spinozorum*.⁸³ There are overtones of fanaticism which are particularly notable in his attack on Le Clerc.⁸⁴ The combination of hatred and unsound judgement gives some point to a comparison between his obsessional quest to uncover secret Spinozism and the persecutors of witchcraft. But his position was different from that of a *malleus maleficarum*. For he was self-appointed to his task. His position was by no means a secure one, as is evident in his very disturbed reaction to the allegation that he was a Non-Juror.⁸⁵

Nothing is known of Carroll after his brief moment of triumph against Le Clerc. It is clear, however, that there would soon be no place for anyone who sought to occupy the role of a *malleus Spinozorum*. Queen Anne died in 1714 and circumstances quickly changed to the disadvantage of the High Church party. Carroll's High Church Tory patrons and connections were removed from their positions of influence.⁸⁶ The Whigs and the Latitudinarians

⁸³ See Note 8 and *The Oxford context*, above.

⁸⁴ Carroll wrote of the burning of Le Clerc's book as "the Act and Deed of the whole Nation, in utter Abhorrence and Detestation of those most Dangerous, Blasphemous, *Atheistical* Principles and Positions" spread by the book. *Spinoza Reviv'd, Part the Second*, p. 7 ff.

⁸⁵ Carroll dared the "mere *Frog*" who told Le Clerc that he was a Non-juror to confront him in person, when he would be told he "Lied like a Rogue". *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸⁶ The Duke of Ormonde was attainted and his fortunes confiscated in 1715. He was replaced as Chancellor and could no longer protect Pratt, who was forced to resign as Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, in 1717. See Note 24 above. By this stage neither of them would have been in a position to help Carroll.

were once again in power. Matters were made worse for Carroll and his friends by the unsuccessful Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, which brought suspicion on all High Church extremists. It is not surprising, therefore, that nothing further was heard from him. As for secret Spinozism, there seems to have been no longer so much as a whisper of it.

SLOCKE, ALIAS LOCKE IN SPINOZISTIC PROFILE¹

Wim Klever

INTRODUCTION

Custom settles habits of thinking in the understanding, as well as of determining in the will, and of motions in the body: all which seem to be but trains of motion in the animal spirits, which, once set a-going, continue in the same steps they have been used to; which, by often treading, are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy and, as it were, natural [...] And to this, perhaps, might be justly attributed most of the sympathies and antipathies observable in men, which work as strongly and produce as regular effects as if they were natural. And are therefore called so, though they at first had no other original but the accidental connexion of two ideas (*Essay* 2.33.6-7).²

It was precisely at the turn of the century, in 1700, when this fragment was published in a newly added chapter “Of the association of ideas”, in the fourth edition of Locke’s *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. 1700 was the year in which the second wave of refutations against the author of the *Opera Posthuma* had died down. The imputation that it was all malicious imposture received less and less credence on the side of right-minded people. Bayle’s much respected and widely read *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) had given a fair summary of the doctrine of the man who from now on had to be considered a ‘virtuous atheist’ instead of a dissembler. With Bayle, a period of historico-biographical research had started, to which another encyclopedist, namely Morhof with his famous *Polyhistor*

¹ I want to thank Wiep van Bunge (Rotterdam), Pierre-François Moreau (Paris), John Yolton (Princeton) and Thomas Cook (Winter Park Fl.) for their helpful, but sometimes very critical, comments on a first draft of this paper, which was presented, two years ago, under the too scandalizing title: “Locke’s Spinozism”. They will discover that something has changed in this new version. My claims have become more modest, and my evidence extended, so that I hope that my argument is now more convincing.

² All quotes from *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* are according to the critical edition of Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), but I suppress the majuscules for every noun. The underlining of words or passages is always mine.

(1688), had also contributed. In his survey it was stated that Spinoza had demonstrated by subtle mathematical argumentation “that all things operate in mutual causality and dependence.”³ In the Academy of Leiden Spinoza’s influence had become rather strong with the work of his friend and follower, the mathematician professor Burchard de Volder. His wonderful *Oratio de rationis viribus et usu in scientia* (1698) testifies to the solid presence of Spinoza’s principles and propositions in his scientific work and starts the new tradition of explaining human life by mechanically working causes—a tradition that is continued in Boerhaave’s work and explained in his *Oratio de usu ratiocinii mechanici in medicina* (1703).⁴

Since I have already reported three times on my research into these two most important representatives of ‘disguised and overt Spinozism around 1700’,⁵ I now want to have a look at another ‘kind of Spinozism’, which became rather powerful during the period of our focus. I purposely say ‘kind of Spinozism’ instead of ‘Spinozism’ or ‘offshoot of Spinozism’ in order to forestall useless discussions. My assertions in this paper—I warn you—are more systematical than historical—i.e. I do not so much claim a direct filiation between Spinoza and Locke (although I do have interesting evidence in favor of such a filiation) but I claim that they held identical (and not only similar) positions in epistemological matters. Comparing their treatises one finds, of course, many differences; the essential points, however, concerning “the nature and origin of the mind” (title of *Ethics* II) are the same, as I will try to show.

‘Slocke’, my code-name or title, might be understood in this double or triple or even quadruple sense, that a) not all Spinoza’s propositions are discoverable in Locke, b) not the whole of Locke’s epis-

³ “Omniaq; mutua causalitate a se invicem dependente agunt. Tollit praeterea causam finalem, ut humani ingenii commentum.” One can find the whole passage in chapter VII (“De libris damnatis”), p. 74.

⁴ On 13th February 1701 De Volder summarizes his Spinozistic basis for Leibniz, who holds to the Cartesian “inertie naturelle”, writing: “nihil quippe fieri videtur absque causa, et omnis causa videtur effectum suum producere necessario.” Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin 1875-1890; Hildesheim 1978), 7 vols., II, p. 224.

⁵ See my “Burchard de Volder (1643-1709), a Crypto-Spinozist on a Leiden Cathedra”, *Lias* 15 (1988), p. 191-242; “Herman Boerhaave, oder: Spinozismus als rein mechanische Wissenschaft des Menschen” in: *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte*, ed. H. Delf et al. (Berlin, 1994), p. 75-93 and “Morbus meus, oder: die Korrespondenz zwischen De Volder und Leibniz” (forthcoming).

temology is retrievable in Spinoza, c) some of the main items of Locke's *Essay* are the same as some central Spinozistic propositions, d) on account of which one might consider them as common and in this sense also Spinozistic⁶ elements in his work. If one can show, as many authors⁷ have done, that Locke is not consistent with himself throughout his work,⁸ there is another reason to distinguish Slocke from Locke, the more Spinozistic author from the author who clearly keeps to traditional religious beliefs and philosophical tenets irreconcilable with his outspoken principles—not to mention his political theories, which are far away from Spinoza's radical republicanism. It is about the first that I am speaking here.

FEATURES OF THE INTERFACE

(1) I opened my paper with a fragment inserted in the 4th edition (1700) of *An Essay* (not 'the' *Essay*), which immediately reminds a reader of Spinoza of the prominent and even decisive role given to 'custom' or 'personal history' in *E II*, prop. 18 cor. and schol.: "prout rerum imagines uniuscuiusque consuetudo in corpore ordinavit." According to both authors, customary or historical associations are the origin of our sympathies and antipathies (Spinoza: *E III*, def. 27

⁶ Another remark, however, must be made before taking off. We have to conceive two kinds of Spinozism: one derived directly or indirectly from Spinoza himself, the other originating along independent lines. Spinoza explains human nature in a scientific way, up to the highest level of illumination. This explanation is found elsewhere too; I only need to mention the Mahayana and Zen writings of Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Seng-Chao, Hui-Neng, Ma Tsu and Lin Chi. One can become a Spinozist without ever having read a single line of Spinoza's books, in spite of the fact that many so-called Spinoza scholars seem to maintain the opposite. Insofar as John Locke defends a couple of quite essential and more or less typical Spinozistic propositions, there is nothing wrong, though also nothing won, with assigning the same label to his position. They are twinborn sons of the same seventeenth-century enlightenment.

⁷ For instance John Yolton in his introduction to the Everyman edition of the *Essay*, p. XV-XVII, and Richard I. Aaron in his well-known monography *John Locke* (Oxford, 1971), *passim*. Rosalie Colie, "The Social Language of John Locke", *Journal of British Studies* 3 (1965), p. 29: "For the lack of consistency Locke has always had his critics."

⁸ Locke himself is the first to confess (in the *Epistle to the Reader*), that the *Essay* contains only "scattered thoughts" as a consequence of "writing in patches and at distant times". He is well aware, that "many things are still misplaced" and that the four books do not constitute a homogeneous system. See also *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford, 1976-1982), 8 vols., II, p. 88.

expl. and *E* III, prop. 15 cor. and schol.); both indicate the same physical scenery, the motion of the animal spirits (Spinoza: *E* II, prop. 17 cor., dem. and schol.); both consider them as purely 'accidental' (Spinoza with "fortuitu occursu" in *E* II, prop. 29 schol. and "per accidens" in *E* III, prop. 15). Locke adds to the quoted fragment the resigned declaration: "When this combination is settled and whilst it lasts, it is not in the power of reason to help us and relieve us from the effects of it" (§ 13), just as Spinoza specified the helplessness of reason against the power of the reactions in *E* IV, prop. 14: "vera boni et mali cognitio, quatenus vera, nullum affectum coërcere potest." Both authors deduce our "intellectual habits" from custom and education. Spinoza: "nam consuetudo et religio non omnibus eadem [...] Prout igitur unusquisque educatus est. (*E* III, def. 27 expl.); Locke: "intellectual habits and defects, this way contracted, are not less frequent and powerful, though less observed [...] Let custom from the very childhood have joined figure and shape to the idea of God, and what absurdities will that mind be liable to about the Deity?" (§ 17). *Associationism*, therefore, as a psychological theory, is shared by our two authors. Locke proposed it 23 years after Spinoza did so.

(2) But let me first concentrate on the basic tenet of Locke's epistemology, his full-fledged *empiricism*.

Whence has it [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring (2.1.2).

All ideas come from sensation or reflection, from observing the objects affecting us (sensation) and observing the dealings or operations of our minds concerning them (reflection), which in their turn are ultimately reducible to sensation. It is important to pay attention to the fact that the objects we are so provided with are twofold: sense-data and 'mind-data'. Spinoza makes the same distinction between these two exclusive kinds of original objects:

Nullas res singulares praeter corpora et cogitandi modos sentimus nec percipimus (*E* II, ax. 5)

What is more: Spinoza affords an extended demonstration of this very same empirical principle, as no one ever did before him, showing that *all* our knowledge is drawn from sensation and nothing else. His argument starts from *E II*, prop. 19, asserting that one knows nothing about external bodies except “per ideas affectionum, quibus corpus afficitur”, and continues in *E II*, prop. 22 asserting that the human mind not only perceives the affections of its body but also their ideas, up to *E II*, prop. 26-29 cor. asserting that there is no other access to acquaintance with bodies or one’s mind than via sensation. Conclusion (formulated in a Paulinian twist): if Locke is the first in the history of Western philosophy to defend empiricism, Spinoza even more so.

(3) The *rejection of innatism*, to which Locke’s first book was dedicated, is likewise shared by Spinoza. Just as Locke compared the mind of a human baby with an “empty cabinet” (1.1.15), so was it stated by Spinoza, already in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), that all of us are born without any knowledge of anything at all (“omnes ignari omnium rerum nascuntur”, XVI, 7.⁹). And in the *Korte Verhandelng*, where Spinoza describes how “a child comes for the first time to the sensation of something”, he emphasizes that “dit is het all dat hy kend” and further denies explicitly that he knows anything else (2.17.4). Likewise, innatism was explicitly denied in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* § 31, in which Spinoza remarks that his speaking, on account of his making a comparison between cognitive progress and the development of technical performances, about one’s “native power” should not be misunderstood. “Per vim nativam intelligo illud, quod in nobis a causis externis causatur, quodque postea in mea philosophia explicabimus.” Accordingly, anti-innatism is a basic point for Spinoza and Locke, by which both philosophers were opposed to Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Scholastics and Descartes altogether.

(4) Though an empiricist, Locke is not at all a sceptic or relativist in an epistemological respect, as will become clear from my fourth point, the *definition of knowledge*. We, humans, do acquire certain

⁹ Locke had acquired this book shortly after its appearance and could have gotten inspiration from it for the first drafts of the Essay, Draft A and B, which both date from 1671. In quoting the *TTPI* I refer to the chapter and the paragraph-numbers that were introduced by Bruder in his edition of 1843.

knowledge, although it must originate from experience in its broadest sense. Even mathematical knowledge is not excluded. The secondary literature has either badly overlooked Locke's empirical justification of non-empirical or super-empirical knowledge or did not understand it. The point is that, having various ideas, we cannot help seeing and perceiving identities and oppositions or relations between these ideas. This is unavoidable and happens automatically; it enables us to acquire general intuitions and abstract science. What I am now going to present contains the kernel of Locke's and Spinoza's epistemology.¹⁰

On this faculty of distinguishing one thing from another [on account of various sensations from affecting bodies] depends the evidence and certainty of several, even very general, propositions, which have passed for innate truths: because men, overlooking the true cause why those propositions find universal assent, impute it wholly to native uniform impressions; whereas it in truth depends upon this clear discerning faculty of the mind, *whereby it perceives two ideas to be the same or different* (2.11.1).

The explanation is much more strongly developed in the baffling opening chapters of Book 4:¹¹

Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection and agreement or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists (4.1.2).¹²

The perception of agreements or identities between various ideas not only produces mathematics, but allows also a scientific ethics:

¹⁰ I did not succeed in finding any analogous or equivalent assertion in the drafts A and B (1671), edited by P.H. Nidditch and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford, 1990). This explanation of the origin of our (general) knowledge makes its first appearance in the first edition of *An Essay* (1690).

¹¹ Aaron writes: "the opening chapters of Book IV [...] have no counterpart in the Drafts of 1671 and were not, apparently, part of the original scheme. They are the product of Locke's reflection between 1671 and 1690". Aaron, *John Locke*, p. 220.

¹² In his correspondence with Stillingfleet, Locke insists on the originality of his definition, even at the expense of exploding the myth of his literary virginity. In the second letter he states that "Nobody that I ever met with had in their writings particularly set down wherein the act of knowing precisely consisted". *Works* (London, 1823), 10 vols., IV, p. 143. In the third letter he states quite specifically that Descartes did not, as he himself did, "place certainty in the perception of agreement or disagreement of ideas" (IV, p. 362). Also H.A.S. Shankula, "Locke, Descartes, and the Science of Nature", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41 (1980), p. 459-477, rejects the Cartesian origin of Locke's definition.

Moral knowledge is as capable of real certainty as mathematicks. For certainty being but the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, and demonstration nothing but the perception of such agreement by the intervention of other ideas or mediums, our moral ideas, as well as mathematical, being archetypes themselves, and so adequate and complete ideas, all the agreement or disagreement which we shall find in them, will produce real knowledge, as well as in mathematical figures (4.4.7).

Neither Hobbes¹³ nor Descartes had argued along this line. Spinoza, however, had done it, in exactly the same manner. It is hardly possible to imagine that Locke had no reminiscences of the passage I am now going to quote from the *Ethics*, the book he had bought immediately after his arrival in Rotterdam on the 7th September 1683. The passage is the scholium of *E* II, prop. 29, right after the deduction of empiricism discussed above:

I say expressly that the mind has, not an adequate, but only a confused knowledge of itself, of its own body and of external bodies, so long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, i.e. so long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that, and not so long as it is *determined internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences and oppositions*. For so often as it is disposed internally, in this or another way, then it regards things clearly and distinctly, as I shall show below.

From the fact that the mind has at the same time (*simul*) various objects, i.e. various ideas, it cannot but understand or see their “convenientias, differentias et oppugnantias”.¹⁴ This, then, is according to Spinoza and Locke the source of our adequate ideas or common notions.¹⁵

¹³ Cf. *Leviathan* (Penguin, ed. C.B. Macpherson) I.5: “When a man reasoneth, hee does nothing else but conceive a summe totall from Addition of parcels or conceive a Remainder, from Substraction of one summe from another [...]; science is the knowledge of Consequences and dependance of one fact upon another.” The contents of the fifth chapter “Of reason and science” clearly show that Hobbes cannot be considered a forerunner of Locke, at least not in this respect.

¹⁴ Cf. *TIE* § 25, sub II, where the highest kind of knowledge is said to exist in intuiting “rerum differentias, convenientias et oppugnantias.” Later on Spinoza will indicate the process of reasoning as a “perceptionum concatenatio” (*TTP* V.36) by means of intermediate links, just as Locke conceived it in the last quoted fragment.

¹⁵ In this respect the line from Spinoza towards Locke is further continued by David Hume. “All certainty arises from the comparison of ideas, and from the discovery of such relations as are unalterable” (*Treatise of Human Nature*, Penguin ed. E.C. Mossner, 1.3.3). “Reason or science is nothing but the comparison of ideas and

(5) Both our authors distinguish between *three kinds of knowledge*. This constitutes our fifth topic. The basic position of this distinction in Spinoza's epistemology is well known.¹⁶ Where Spinoza speaks about three "modi percipiendi" (*TIE*) or "genera cognitionis" (*E*), Locke prefers the term "degrees of knowledge" (title of 4.2); but he does also know the expressions "sorts of knowledge" (e.g. 4.2.14) and "ways of perceiving" (4.2.1), which might be a literal translation of Spinoza's "modi percipiendi". The cardinal passage in Locke is:

These two, viz. intuition and demonstration, are the degrees of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but faith or opinion but not knowledge, at least in all general truths. There is, indeed, another perception of the mind, employed about the particular existence of finite beings without us, which, going beyond bare probability and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of knowledge [...] So that, I think, we may add to the two former sorts of knowledge this also of the existence of particular external objects, by that perception and consciousness we have of the actual entrance of ideas from them and allow for these *three degrees of knowledge, viz. intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive*, in each of which there are different degrees and ways of evidence and certainty (4.2.14).

Those who know Spinoza's work will certainly admit that this description of the three kinds of knowledge does not deviate an inch from Spinoza's, except for the fact that the order is reversed. 'Opinio' or 'fides' are also his names for the lowest kind, which is also called 'imagination'. If the mind perceives the relation of agreement or disagreement between two or more ideas "immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other" (4.2.1), then it has "intuitive knowledge". This knowledge is "irresistible and like bright sunshine." Where reasoning comes in and the knower makes use of a "common measure" in order to discover the agreement or disagreement of two ideas, he has only "demonstrative knowledge." "This knowledge by intervening proofs, though it be certain, yet the

the discovery of their relations" (*THN* 3.1.1). Cf. my articles "Hume contra Spinoza?", *Hume Studies* 16 (1990), p. 89-106, "A Vindication", *ibid.*, 17 (1991), p. 209-21, and "More about Hume's Debt to Spinoza", *ibid.*, 19 (1993), p. 55-74.

¹⁶ The theory is developed three times: *TIE* § 18-24, *KV* 2.1-2 and 21-22 and *E* II, prop. 40, schol. 2. Spinoza, in his turn, learned the thing from his master Van den Enden, who already placed the highest value on the distinction between "driederley kennisse". See Franciscus van den Enden, *Vrye Politijke Stellingen*, ed. Wim Klever (Amsterdam, 1992), p. 103.

evidence of it is not altogether so clear and bright, nor the assent so ready, as in intuitive knowledge" (4.2.4). Spinoza makes the same remarks. Intuition is "without any operation" (*TIE* § 24), is compared with "light" (*E* II, prop. 43 schol. and *TTP* I) and is said to involve highest certainty. In the second kind of knowledge one sees the connexion "ex alia re" or "vi demonstrationis" (*TIE* § 21). Its certainty has a lesser degree because the relation is not seen "uno intuitu". Sometimes the reasoning requires "a long train of proofs" (*Essay* 4.2.6) or 'long concatenation of perceptions' (*TTP* V.7), which is not convincing "without pains and attention" (4.2.4) or without "very great caution, acuteness and selfrestraint" (*TTP* V.36). The lowest degree is a yet undoubted (*indubie*, *TIE* § 18) intuition of concrete things, but in a confused way.

Leon Roth¹⁷ concludes that Locke learnt this theory of knowledge from Descartes. The *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* would have been the source. This work, however, apart from the fact that it was not yet published, does not in the least contain the same conception. Aaron, too, is embarrassed by the sudden appearance of the new conception: "in 1671 Locke had not yet found it"; he also looks for a way out by indicating Descartes as a source. It seems to me that the question is not worthy of discussion. The complete agreement between the texts of Spinoza and Locke is evident for those who know both parties; why, then, look elsewhere for a sophisticated or far-fetched explanation?

(6) Well, what do we grasp by these various ways of perception? The sensitive kind, *sensation*, does not yield more than the so-called "secondary qualities", of which it is said that "there is nothing like our ideas existing in the bodies themselves" (2.8.15). Spinoza is not less emphatic in stressing the same point. Imagination or opinion is nothing but the knowledge of the imprints or images of the external bodies in our bodies and does not reproduce or represent their figure or other properties. Spinoza was certainly not the first to make the distinction between the secondary qualities and the primary qualities; this point was common to all mechanical philosophers: Descartes, Gassendi, Boyle and Spinoza. Spinoza had been very explicit about it in a commentary sent to Boyle in 1662: "notiones

¹⁷ "Note on the Relationship between Locke and Descartes", *Mind* 44 (1936), p. 414-416.

ex vulgi usu factas, vel quae naturam explicant, non ut in se est, sed prout ad sensum humanum refertur, nullo modo [...] miscendas (ne dicam confundendas) cum notionibus castis et quae naturam, ut in se est, explicant. Huius generis sunt motus, quies et eorum leges; illius vero visibile, invisibile, calidum frigidum, et, ut statim dicam, fluidum etiam et consistens etc.”¹⁸ It is impossible to discover any difference between Locke’s and Spinoza’s concept of sensation. The qualities perceived by the mind in the act of sensation are not qualities of the things themselves, since we come to acquire them “by accidental alterations in or operations on our bodies (2.9.6) or, as Spinoza writes, they are “the ideas of the affections, by which the body is affected” (*E* II, prop. 19 etc.).

(7) This means that by and large *nature is unknown to us*, at least in its details. “Real essences [...] we know them not” (3.6.9). We do not know how things are in themselves, because we only dispose of sense data. “All the ideas we have of particular distinct sorts of substances are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas” (2.23.6). A substance is nothing but “an uncertain supposition of we know not what” (1.4.19), a poor conjecture about the causes of our sensations. The “radical texture of bodies” (2.23.11) is hidden from us; the “internal fabric” (4.12.11) of singular things is much too complicated for our faculties to penetrate. Neither do we know how in fact things are related to each other. We have no idea of “the thousand changes that bodies [...] cause in one another, which we never suspect, because they never appear in sensible effects” (2.23.9).¹⁹

Spinoza no less emphatically rejected the theory that we humans have knowledge of the particular structure and relationships of concrete things in the world, as we saw already in our reference to *E* II, prop. 19-29. Man only discerns “consequences without premisses”

¹⁸ From 1660 till 1665 Locke—“Boyle’s pupil” and “close friend” according to Maurice Cranston, *John Locke. A Biography* (Oxford, 1985), p. 75-80—belonged to the circle of virtuosi cooperating with Boyle. The “odd philosopher”, from whom Boyle had received many critical letters via Oldenburg and of whom both had acquired the *PPC/CM*, may well have been the subject of a few conversations. Cf. what Oldenburg writes to Spinoza: “Dominus Boylius et ego non raro de te, de tua eruditione et profundis meditationibus confabulamur” (Letter 25, dd 28-4-1665). Locke may have attended some of those conversations.

¹⁹ This ignorance was intimated by Locke through his reference to *Eccles.* XI,5 on the title-page of his *An Essay*: “As thou knowest not what is the Way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child: Even so thou knowest not the Works of God, who maketh all things.”

(*E* II, prop. 28 dem.). Locke might have read this also in Spinoza's earlier works, in the *PPC*: "Neque enim sensus aliud quid veritatis inquisitori suggerere possunt quam naturae phaenomena" (*E* II, prop. 6 schol.), or in the *TTP*: "quomodo res revera ordinatae et concatenatae sunt, plane ignoramus" (IV.4).²⁰

(8) But neither for Locke nor for Spinoza is this the last word on the question. There is a way to *adequate notions* of things as they are in themselves:

Such as are utterly inseparable from the body, in what estate soever it be; such as in all the alterations and changes it suffers, all the force can be used upon it, it constantly keeps; and such as sense constantly finds in every particle of matter, which has bulk enough to be perceived; and the mind finds inseparable from every particle of matter, though less than to make itself singly be perceived by our senses (2.8.9).

These adequate notions constitute our knowledge of the original or primary qualities of body. Locke usually enumerates solidity (mass, bulk), extension (quantity, number), figure, and motion (mobility, motion and rest). In another place (2.10.6) he describes these "fixed" elements of our mind as "the affections of *all* kinds of beings, as existence, duration, and number, which almost every object that affects our senses, every thought which employs our minds, bring along with them." He further explains that "those ideas which are constantly joined to all others must therefore be concluded to be the essence of those things, which have constantly those ideas joined to them and are inseparable from them" (2.13.26). These primary, original, general or adequate²¹ notions of things constitute the basis of science; if they are not our foundation, we build on "floating and uncertain principles" (2.13.28).

It is evident that Spinoza's deduction (*E* II, prop. 37-39) of the adequate or common notions is more than comparable to these Lockean passages; it is their full equivalent. They are what we perceive in everything; they are our notions of the common elements of things. For confirmation I only need to quote *E* II, prop. 38 and cor.:

²⁰ Cf. Hume's scepticism concerning matters of fact.

²¹ "Those [ideas] I call adequate which perfectly represent those archetypes which the mind supposes them taken from, which it intends them to stand for, and to which it refers them. Indadequate ideas are such which are but a partial or incomplete representation of those archetypes to which they are referred" (2.31.1).

Those things which are common to all and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately [...] From this it follows, that there are certain ideas or notions, common to all men. For all bodies agree in certain things, which must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly by all.

The notions in question are not only called common since they are shared by all men, they are also called so because they are the common element of our perceptions of whatever things. The 'common to all men' is only a part of Spinoza's affirmation; the 'common to all perceptions' is the other part.

(9) We do know, therefore, something about everything, though not much, by means of intuition and demonstration, on the basis of which *abstract mathematics and physics are possible*. There are, indeed, a couple of "visible connexions" between ideas of sensation, though "very few" (4.3.14). The principle of causality (everything has a cause of its existence and operation) belongs to it according to Draft B,²² but also its mechanical specification: "Impulse [is] the only way which we can conceive bodies operate in" (2.8.11). The elementary (mathematical) truths are known by everybody, in spite of the current opinion about their ignorance, which is due to "ill use of words" (4.3.30) or "miscalling of those ideas contrary to the usual signification of the words of that language" (4.4.9). "The knowledge we have of mathematical truths is not only certain, but real knowledge, and not the bare empty vision of vain, insignificant chimeras of the brain" (4.4.6). 'Real' means "a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things" (4.4.3), not of course as a pictorial resemblance. Another quote:

Our knowledge concerning corporeal substances will be very little advanced [...] till we are made to see what qualities and powers of bodies have a necessary connexion or repugnancy one with another; which in the present state of philosophy I think we know but *to a very small degree* (4.3.16).²³

²² "Though we can have no farther undoubted knowledge of the connection of assigned causes & effects then what we attaine by our senses, yet we have a certain knowledge of the truth of this universal proposition. That nothing can begin to be without a cause or / everything that has a beginning hath a cause."

²³ That Locke is not always consistent becomes apparent in the question under discussion. Even as he concedes a bit of abstract mathematics and physics, he writes: "we are not capable of scientific knowledge, nor shall ever be able to discover general, instructive, unquestionable truths concerning them [physical things]" (4.3.26). How to combine this logically with: "We are able, I imagine, to reach very little gen-

All this constitutes a striking parallel to Spinoza's sayings and practice. "*Perpauca*" (TIE § 22) are the features of nature directly or indirectly known by intuition. Spinoza exposed them in the axioms and propositions of the *Ethics*, especially those of Part I and of the compendium of his physics ("pauca de natura corporum"). Concerning the principle of causality the reader is referred to the fundamental axiom 3 part I. As regards the mechanical principle, to its appendix ("mechanica arte"), *Cogitata Metaphysica* 2.6.a ("We have demonstrated that there are in matter nothing but mechanical textures and operations") or another text for the Boyle circle, Letter 13 ("We know that all mutations of bodies are according to the laws of mechanics"). Just like Locke, Spinoza ascribes the so-called ignorance of mathematical truths to ill use of words:

Most errors consist only in our not rightly applying names to things. For when someone says that the lines which are drawn from the centre of a circle to its circumference are unequal, he surely understands by a circle something different from what mathematicians understand. Similarly, when men err in calculating, they have certain numbers in their mind and different ones on the paper (E II, prop. 47 schol.).²⁴

(10) One of the main items of this general physics is the well-known *modal character of all physical things*. Originally, in the drafts, Locke did not say a word about it; in his Dutch time (1683-1689), however—to be more precise, when he lived in Rotterdam—he became strongly convinced of it and testified to his development in (and exclusively in) the Fourth Book of his *An Essay*, written in this town. Whereas the first three books qualify things simply as substances, as if they could exist independently from each other, the fourth book, which is not anticipated in the drafts, contains a most impressive, auto-critical chapter "Of universal propositions" (4.6), in which the concept of independent or autonomous substances is completely 'demythologized'. In the secondary literature, for instance in the four volumes of the most relevant articles on Locke edited by

eral knowledge concerning the species of bodies and their several properties" (4.12.10)?

²⁴ For Spinoza's physics, see my "Moles in Motu. Principles of Spinoza's Physics", *Studia Spinozana* 3 (1988), p. 165-194; for his concept of mathematics, I refer to my "Mathematicum ingenium. Sur les mathématiques de Spinoza", in: *La matematizzazione dell'universo. Momenti della cultura matematica tra '500 e '600*, ed. Lino Conti (Porziuncula, 1992), p. 312-344.

Richard Ashcraft,²⁵ I could find no discussion of this Lockean outline of physics. In order to convince you, my readers, that from now on Locke considers finite things as modifications of the structure of the universe, in all respects mutually dependent in the boundless continuum of fluid matter, I must again quote texts:

For we are wont to consider the substances we meet with, each of them, as an entire thing by itself, having all its qualities in itself and independent of other things, *overlooking*, for the most part, the operations of those invisible fluids they are encompassed with and upon whose motions and operations depend the greatest part of those qualities, which are taken notice of in them and are made by us the inherent marks of distinction, whereby we know and denominate them (4.6.11).

If this passage is still rather moderate, the following biological fragment shows the radical intention.

If we look a little nearer into the state of animals, we shall find that their *dependence* as to life, motion, and the most considerable qualities to be observed in them, is so *wholly on extrinsical causes and qualities of other bodies*, that make no part of them, that they cannot subsist a moment without them: though yet those bodies on which they depend are little taken notice of, and make no part of the complex ideas we frame of those animals. Take the air but a minute from the greatest part of living creatures, and they presently loose sense, life, and motion.

The apotheosis of this 'spinozistic cosmology' is the following text:

We are then quite out of the way when we think that things contain within themselves the qualities that appear to us in them; and we in vain search for that constitution within the body of a fly or an elephant upon which depend those qualities and powers we observe in them. For which perhaps, to understand them aright, we ought to look not only beyond this our earth and atmosphere, but even beyond the sun or remotest star our eyes have yet discovered. For *how much the being and operation of particular substances in this our globe depend on causes utterly beyond our view* is impossible for us to determine. We see and perceive some of the motions and grosser operations of things here about us, but whence the streams come that keep all these curious machines in motion and repair, how conveyed and *modified*, is beyond our notice and apprehension; and the great parts and wheels, as I may so say, of this stupendous structure of the *universe*, may, for aught we know, have such *a connexion and dependence in their influences and operations one upon another*, that perhaps things in this our mansion would put on quite another face and cease to be what they are, if some one of the stars or

²⁵ John Locke. *Critical Assessments* (London, 1991), 4 vols.

great bodies incomprehensibly remote from us should cease to be or move as it does. This is certain: *things*, however absolute and entire they seem in themselves, *are but retainers of other parts of nature* for that which they are most taken notice of by us. Their observable qualities, actions and powers are owing to something without them.

As in so many other cases discussed before, this chapter of general physics from Locke's pen²⁶ is equal to Spinoza's too. Could anybody tell me the difference between Locke's concept of "matter under its diverse modifications" (4.6.14) and Spinoza's "materiam diversimode affectam, [cuius] partes modaliter tantum distinguuntur" (*E* I, prop. 15 schol.)? I don't know. All things exist and operate as effects of others, in infinite relationships, that is, after all: they are caused, mutually (*vicissim*), by each other (Letter 32). That is the universe, according to Locke and Spinoza.

What is more, Locke claims certainty for his purely general outline of the "secrets of nature" (see the title and conclusion of chapter 4.6). We do not know a lot. We have very poor ideas of substances; their private essences are unknown to us (4.6.12). "Guessing" is our normal way of dealing with external things.²⁷ But, "the very few general propositions", mentioned just now, derive their certainty from the perception of the agreement of our own ideas. Thus far they are mathematically necessary, as Spinoza stated too: "*certitudo mathematica: hoc est, quae ex necessitate perceptionis rei perceptae aut visae sequitur*" (*TTP* II.12). Such perception must take place and is unequivocal (clear and distinct).

(11) Another ingredient of this scientific, though rather abstract, world-view is *determinism*. Locke is only once explicit about physical determinism, namely in 2.21.9:

A tennis ball, whether in motion by the stroke of a racket or lying still at rest, is not by anyone taken to be a free agent.[...] All its both

²⁶ It is really deplorable that no scholarly study of Locke's physics is available.

²⁷ For our conjectures concerning the external world and the causes working in it we are entirely committed to arguing from *analogy*: "Analogy in these matters is the only help we have, and it is from that alone we draw all our grounds of probability. Thus observing that the bare rubbing of two bodies violently one upon another produces heat, and very often fire itself, we have reason to think that what we call heat and fire consists in a violent agitation of the imperceptible minute parts of the burning matter" (4.16.12). Spinoza defended and practiced this method in Letters 2 ("ex analogia universi"), 6 and 13 (to the Boyle group that Locke may have known) and he referred to it in *CM* 2.7.7 ("When we pay attention to the analogy of the whole nature, we shall consider her as one being...").

motion and rest come under our idea of necessary, and are so called.²⁸

But he cannot avoid the point in his discussion of the will. Nowhere does Locke's ambivalence become more apparent than in 2.21. After the first edition (1690), this chapter "Of Power", which has no counterpart in the 1671 drafts, was drastically revised in the second edition (1694), as Locke confessed in his *Epistle to the Reader*.²⁹ R.I. Aaron states:

Locke on the whole feels that we are not free to will, that we are determined as to what we do will. In the second edition, however, he holds that this account of the matter is contrary to the facts and puts forward another theory which, while still determinist in the main, does leave a loophole for freedom *a necessitate* and so makes moral responsibility a fact.³⁰

What is given to us is a hybrid chapter of 45 pages, which can by no means be made consistent. But... it can be understood! As an adherent or admirer of Slocke, I take only a part of it, leaving the rest as perpetual stuff for more orthodox Locke-scholars. But even before this sorting out of two Lockes I will not side with Leo Strauss and his famous assertion that Locke sets up a smokescreen and does not really say what he means, but veils his true doctrine.³¹ Locke is clear enough, but—I cannot see it otherwise—gives consciously contradictory statements, as if he would say: take what you like and may digest. The available evidence against the freedom of the will is as follows:

To return, then, to the inquiry, What is it that determines the will in regard to our actions? And that, upon second thoughts, I am apt to imagine is not, as is generally supposed, the greater good in view, but some (for the most part the most pressing) uneasiness a man is at present under. This is that which successively *determines the will* and sets us upon those actions we perform. This uneasiness we may call, as it is, desire (2.21.31).

²⁸ This "and rest" is an exciting detail which might indicate that Locke knew about Spinoza's criticism of Descartes' principle of inertia. Compare also 4.6.11: "water, in which to us fluidity is an essential quality, left to itself, would cease to be fluid..." See further my "The Relativity of Inertia, or, Spinoza's Principle" (forthcoming).

²⁹ "I have found reason somewhat to alter the thoughts I formerly had concerning that which gives the last determination to the Will in all voluntary actions."

³⁰ *John Locke*, p. 68.

³¹ See L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, 1953).

That it is this *uneasiness that determines the will to the successive voluntary actions*, whereof the greatest part of our lives is made up, and by which we are conducted through different courses to different ends, I shall endeavour to show, both from experience and the reason of the thing (2.21.33).

A constant succession of uneasinesses, out of that stock which natural wants or acquired habits have heaped up, take the will in their turns; and no sooner is one action dispatched, which by such a determination of the will we are set upon, but another uneasiness is ready to set us on work (2.21.45).³²

A commentator cannot add clarity to this language. It is evident that this is exactly the same position as Spinoza's where he writes: "In mente nulla est absoluta sive libera voluntas, sed mens ad hoc vel illud volendum determinatur a causa..." (*E* II, prop. 48). "Uneasiness" is Locke's term for "affectus" in the case of Spinoza. The term is alternated with "desire" and "passion"; its meaning is exemplified by anger, envy, shame, love, revenge etc. (2.21.38-39). "Being determined by uneasinesses" might be considered a translation of "per affectum disponi" (*E* II, prop. 39 schol.) or "affectibus conflicti" (*E* IV, prop. 33).³³

The "good", we know as such, "does not determine the will, untill our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it."³⁴ Both Locke and Spinoza quote in this connection Ovid's famous dictum: "video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor" and make it intelligible (2.21.35 and *E* IV, prop. 17 schol.). Both campaign in the same context against the misleading concept of the will, as if it were an operating faculty (2.21.6 and *E* II, prop. 48 schol.). Both see human conduct as an effect of the strongest of numerous balancing powers, as a product of the "topping" or "most pressing" uneasiness (2.21.38-40 and *E* IV, prop. 7-14). Finally, both define 'liberty' as unconditional power. Locke: "Our idea of liberty reach-

³² The understanding is merely passive too and happens "whether we will or no... The understanding can no more refuse to have nor to alter [its ideas] nor blot them out and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas, which the objects set before it do therein produce" (2.1.25). Compare for this kind of intellectual determinism Spinoza's assessment of knowing as "suyvere lyding" (*KV* 2.15).

³³ See also the 'explicatio' to the definition of 'cupiditas' (*E* III, def. 1).

³⁴ Locke confesses in 2.21.35 that when he first published his thoughts on this subject, he took it for granted "by the general consent of all mankind", that the good as conceived by reason was able to determine the will. "Now I have ventured to recede from so received an opinion."

es as far as that power and no further”; Spinoza: *E I*, def. 7. And when they speak about man’s freedom, it is always under the proviso: “so far as” (2.21.21) or “quatenus” (*E IV*, prop. 35). Is man more than “bare passion”?

No, “a man in respect of willing or the act of volition [...] cannot be free”. This is Locke’s proposition. A friend of Spinoza may get much profit from reading Locke’s interesting chapter 2.21. In spite of Locke’s many reservations and qualifications a critical reader will not miss his intention. Locke’s friend William Molyneux annotated in a letter: “At last the great question of Liberty and Necessity seems to vanish. And herein you seem to make all sins to proceed from our Understandings, or to be against Conscience; and not at all from the Depravity of our Wills.”³⁵ Sin, after all, disappears from Locke’s anthropology.

(12) This *anthropology* has many other features in common with Spinoza’s doctrine of man. I only mention a few striking items:

- (12.1) – The soul is not, as Descartes would have it, “a substance that always thinks” (2.1.19), but a set of ideas of “the different degrees and modes of motion in our animal spirits, variously agitated by external objects” (2.8.4). Cf. *E II*, prop. 14-15.
- (12.2) – Perception is correlated with bodily aptitudes and has, therefore, various degrees in all sorts of animals (2.9.12 and *E II*, prop. 13 cor. and schol.)
- (12.3) – We always know at once bodies or motions and modifications of thought:

Every act of sensation, when duly considered, gives us an equal view of both parts of nature, corporeal and spiritual. For whilst I know, by seeing or hearing, etc., that there is some corporeal being without me, the object of that sensation, I do more certainly know that there is some spiritual being within me, that sees and hears. This, I must be convinced, cannot be the action of bare insensible matter; nor even could be, without an immaterial thinking being (2.23.15). “It being impossible for anyone to perceive without perceiving that he does

³⁵ See *Correspondence IV*, p. 600. The letter dates from 22-12-1692. Locke answered (20-1-1693): “I cannot make freedom in man consistent with omnipotence and omniscience in God, though I am as fully persuaded of both as of any truths I most firmly assent to.”

perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so" (2.27.9).

Compare this with Spinoza's inferences from his propositions about our simultaneous knowing of the two attributes accessible to us:

For as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it (*E* II, prop. 21 schol.). The human mind perceives not only the affections of the body, but also the ideas of these affections (*E* II, prop. 22).

(12.4) – Interaction between mind and body is inconceivable:

As the ideas of sensible secondary qualities, which we have in our minds, can by us be no way deduced from bodily causes, nor any correspondence or connexion be found between them and those primary qualities which [...] produce them in us: so, on the other side, the operation of our minds upon our bodies is as inconceivable. How any thought should produce a motion in body is as remote from the nature of our ideas, as how any body should produce any thought in the mind (4.3.28).

One could not wish a better paraphrase of *E* III, prop. 2:

The body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the mind cannot determine the body to motion, to rest or to anything else (if there is anything else).

(12.5) – Concerning man's place or status in the universe, the agreement is likewise perfect. Locke considers man to be an "inconsiderable, mean, and impotent creature [...] who in all probability is one of the lowest of all intellectual beings" (4.3.22), just as in the view of Spinoza man is no more than a "*particula naturae*" (*TTP* XVI.9) with infinitesimally small power (*E* IV, prop. 3).

(13) In his Fourth Book Locke defends the desirability of an '*ethica more geometrico demonstrata*'. He does not use this expression, but the meaning is there.

Morality is *capable of demonstration*, as well as mathematics. For the ideas that *ethics* are conversant about being all real essences, and such as I imagine have a discoverable connexion and agreement one with another: so far as we can find their habitudes and relations, so far we shall be possessed of certain, real and general truths (4.12.8).

Moral science has to be counted

amongst the sciences capable of demonstration, wherein I doubt not but *from self-evident propositions by necessary consequences* as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out (4.3.18).

This 'spinozistic' procedure is appreciated and recommended as the best method for a treatise on morals. Locke realizes that there are many difficulties to overcome in such a treatment of moral matters—this on account of the many ambiguities in terminology, vagueness of concepts and the many prejudices. But

these disadvantages in moral ideas, which has made them be thought not capable of demonstration, may in good measure be *remedied by definitions*, setting down that collection of simple ideas, which every term shall stand for, and then using the terms steadily and constantly for that precise collection (4.3.20).

It is in my view impossible that Locke, writing this in the mid-eighties, is not thinking of the *Ethics*, the only example of such a treatise in the history of human thought, published a decade before, and heavily discussed in this period (not least by many of his own close friends).³⁶ I surmise that he is making an appreciative *allusion* to *Spinoza* when he writes:

We have reason to thank those who in this latter age have taken another course and have trod out to us, though not an easier way to learned ignorance, yet a surer way to profitable knowledge (4.12.12).

(14) This survey of common elements in Spinoza's and Locke's philosophy may not be concluded without considering their theories of *language*. As everyone knows, the much neglected or underestimated Third Book is totally dedicated to "words". But also in the other books there is much said about language. Most impressive is Locke's

³⁶ There is an interesting letter of Jean Le Clerc about the subject. On 5-7-1692 (see *Correspondence* III, p. 472) he reports to Locke a discussion he had with De Volder: "Je connois de gens qui souhaiteroient qu'il y eut divers endroits que vous eussiez étendu, comme celui ou vous dites que la Morale peut être démontrée. Il y a quelques mois que dinant chez un de mes amis avec Mr. De Volder Professeur à Leide, que vous connoissez: il me témoignoit beaucoup d'envie de voir ce qu'on pourroit dire là dessus." From a subsequent letter (no. 1525, p. 501) it becomes clear that Locke had plans for such a treatise. Also Molyneux (p. 27-8-1692) presses him on the same project, referring to "the hints you frequently give in your Essay."

denial of the possibility of verbal revelation³⁷ on account of the fact that the meaning we attach to words coming to us in sound or writing can never be something we did not yet know.

I say that no man inspired by God can by any revelation communicate to others any new simple ideas which they had not before from sensation or reflection. For, whatsoever impressions he himself may have from the immediate hand of God, this revelation, if it be of new simple ideas, cannot be conveyed to another, either by words or any other signs. Because words, by their immediate operation on us, cause no other ideas but of their natural sounds; and it is by the custom of using them for signs that they excite and revive in our minds latent ideas, but yet only such ideas as were there before. For words seen or heard recall to our thoughts those ideas only which to us they have been wont to be signs of, but cannot introduce any perfectly new and formerly unknown simple ideas (4.18.3).³⁸

This is a denial of supernatural revelation that is congenial to Spinoza's argument and to his theory of language as presented in *E* II, prop. 18 and schol. Spinoza, in his turn, had already developed the argument in the same context:

One might rightly ask, how God can make himself known to man, and whether this happens, or could happen, through spoken words, or immediately, without using any other thing to do it.

We answer: not in any case by words. For then man would have had to know already the meanings of those words before they were spoken to him [...] And what we say here about words, we want applied to all other external signs. So we consider it impossible that God could make himself known to men by means of any external signs. We also consider it unnecessary that this should happen through anything other than God's essence alone and man's intellect (*KV*2.24).

³⁷ Although he explicitly claims to assent to God's revelation in 4.16.14—another example of seeming (!) inconsistencies in the text.

³⁸ This fragment is drawn from a chapter with the title: "Of faith and reason, and their distinct provinces". The content of this chapter is rather close to the *TTP*, in which it is defended, that "inter fidem sive theologiam et philosophiam nullum esse commercium nullamve affinitatem" (XIV.37). On the other hand: "the same truths may be discovered and conveyed down from revelation, which are discoverable to us by reason". But "for whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be certainer to us than those which are conveyed to us by traditional revelation" (4.18.4). These points are essential for Spinoza too. Knowledge by revelation can never reach "a philosophical or mathematical certainty" (*TTP* XIV.36), but has nonetheless a full "convenientia" with the lessons of reason (XV.24). Both thinkers reject the possibility of any substantial repugnance between faith and reason (*TTP* XV.24; *Essay* 4.18.5).

Words are very poor and ambiguous instruments of communication. We can only become sure of their meaning by custom or consulting lexica, but even then our ideas concerning their meaning (and still worse, concerning the intentions of the writer or speaker) are essentially confused. One is always necessarily reminded of one's own sensations and can never supersede their limits. Locke defends, in a marvellous chapter "of the imperfection of words" (3.9) their *unavoidable obscurity*, continuing thereby a tradition which started with L. Meyer³⁹ and Spinoza. I will not omit here his conclusion with its critical overtone concerning theology:

Nor is it to be wondered that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that *doubt and uncertainty which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance* [...] Since then the precepts of natural religion are plain and very intelligible to all mankind and seldom come to be controverted, and other revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages, are liable to the *common and natural obscurities and difficulties incident to words*, methinks it would become us to be more careful and diligent in observing the former, and less magisterial, positive, and imperious in imposing our own sense and interpretations of the latter (3.9.23).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

(1) "The shadows of great philosophers, elongated and distorted, extend far into the future."⁴⁰ I do not claim to have found the real Locke behind his shadow. Locke's work is too rich and too complicated for painting a full presentation on one canvas. On the other hand, I shall not admit that my selective story is a construction. *The materials used by me are abundant and authentic, fundamental and unambiguous.* By means of the quoted texts and the references I have at least, so is my modest claim, touched a great part of the real Locke, a part, moreover, in which he is indistinguishable from Spinoza, as I have tried to demonstrate by parallel texts from Spinoza. That is why I speak, in order to mark my special position, about Slocke, i.e. a Spinozistic Locke.

³⁹ See his *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* (1666, ch. 3, § 7-8 and ch. 4, § 1) and the fine commentaries of Gianfranco Bonola, "La proposta ermeneutica radicale di Lodewijk Meijer" and "Un filo scoperto", both in *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 5 (1988), p. 261-296 and 7 (1990), p. 157-185 respectively.

⁴⁰ Richard Watson, "Shadow History in Philosophy", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993), p. 95.

(2) I have to mention a peculiar experience. During my research for this paper I was continuously annoyed by certain obtuse remarks from the side of famous Locke scholars who do not even taste and digest the main propositions of the work. According to the famous Norman Kemp Smith, "Locke's chief merit lies not in the answers he gave, but in the questions he was first to raise."⁴¹ Well, were the answers not right? My interpretation is quite the opposite. Maurice Cranston writes in his biography: "Locke's theory of perception [...] is easily refuted [...] It suffers from its dependence on the muddled and equivocal doctrine of ideas."⁴² I, in my innocence, do not know of any flaw in Locke's theory of perception and have never met a better one. Neither do I know what is wrong with Locke's 'theory' of ideas, which fully agrees with Descartes', Spinoza's and Hume's, but, indeed, differs considerably from contemporary misunderstandings.⁴³ How is it that I always have the impression that the commentators go astray and that Locke himself is right? Might it not be because I approach his texts from Spinoza onwards, having imbibed the latter's epistemological concepts?

Neither the fact that Spinoza and Locke have the same epistemology nor my own disappointment in reading the commentators constitutes a decisive argument for a relation of filiation. The first of these, however, is a strong indication in that direction. *I cannot imagine that agreement in so many basic points is fully accidental*, especially if one realizes that there cannot be found predecessors for most of them.

(3) In this context it is not quite irrelevant that Locke owned the three published works of Spinoza, and that he had *ample opportunities for attending discussions of Spinoza's works*: in Oxford (the sixties); in the Boyle circle and chez Cudworth and More in Cambridge; in Paris (various periods between 1675 and 1679) in the salons of the virtuosi, where Spinozism had penetrated and was attacked by Simon and Huet;⁴⁴ but, of course, mostly in Holland (1683-1689),

⁴¹ *John Locke* (Manchester, 1933), p. 30.

⁴² *John Locke*, p. 268-269.

⁴³ Locke's 'definition' is given in 2.8.8: "Whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call idea."

⁴⁴ Cf. P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1982), ch. 3: "La pénétration du spinozisme en France".

where he had so many contacts with friends who were, in a positive or negative sense, much occupied with Spinozism. First of all, Spinozism must have been a topic in the many conversations with his Remonstrant friends Philippus van Limborch and Jean Le Clerc. Van Limborch wrote long letters about Spinoza (his 'Sphinx') to Lambertus van Velthuysen (1671), Paets (1678) and Le Clerc (1681 and 1682).⁴⁵ One can hardly believe that the three 'latitudinarians' would have avoided the hottest item of the day. Locke was also in contact with the mathematician and burgomaster of Amsterdam, Johannes Hudde, Spinoza's friend from 1661 onwards. In a letter to Van Limborch (1689) he characterized him as "such a great man".⁴⁶ At the end of the century Hudde, in fact, asked him the same question he had formerly put to Spinoza.⁴⁷ Finally, according to Le Clerc, Locke was also acquainted with De Volder, the famous Leiden professor of mathematics, who was a friend and follower of Spinoza too.⁴⁸

(4) Apart from the common doctrines, treated in the central part of my paper, Locke's text seems to show a few other marks, that might be conceived as weak *vestiges of his reading Spinoza*, because the implied theory is typical for him.

- (4.1) – "Common use regulates the meaning of words" (3.9.8) might be a reminiscence of "verba ex solo usu certam habent significationem" (*TTP* XII.11).
- (4.2) – Locke's explanation of our learning the meaning of words in childhood by customary connections of things and sounds is the same as Spinoza's in *E* II, prop. 18 schol., the example of the 'apple' (3.19.15 and 1.2.23) included!
- (4.3) – Further: "words [are] no man's private possession" (3.11.11) to compare with "vulgus linguam [...] servat" (*TTP* VII.40). One ought not to change the meaning of words without sufficient reason.

⁴⁵ See Bijlage IX-XI in K.O. Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring* (Utrecht, 1980).

⁴⁶ See *Correspondence* III, p. 737 ff.

⁴⁷ See my "Hudde's Question on God's Uniqueness. A Reconstruction on the Basis of Van Limborch's Correspondence with John Locke", *Studia Spinozana* 5 (1989), p. 327-359.

⁴⁸ See my "Burchard De Volder (1643-1709), a Crypto-Spinozist on a Leiden Cathedra".

- (4.4) – Another thing is the ‘penuria verborum’, often repeated by Spinoza⁴⁹ and Locke. See 3.11.27: “the provision of words is so scanty in respect of that infinite variety of thoughts...”
- (4.5) – Spinoza’s statement that “partes durationis nullam habent inter se connexionem” (*CM* 2.11.2) is admitted, if not reflected, in Locke’s statement that “there is no necessary connexion of [man’s] existence a minute since with his existence now” 4.11.9): the same word ‘connexion’, the same idea.
- (4.6) – Spinoza’s phrase: “homo siti et fame periret, si, antequam perfectam obtinuisset demonstrationem, cibum ac potum sibi profuturum, edere aut bibere nollet” (Letter 56) resounds in Locke’s phrase: “He that in the ordinary affairs of life would admit of nothing but direct demonstration would be sure of nothing in this world but perishing quickly. The wholesomeness of his meat or drink would not give him reason to venture on it” (4.11.10). Apart from the meaning itself there are four relevant words (demonstration, perish, meat and drink) common to both phrases.
- (4.7) – In the same way, one may also approach the sentence “Upon this ground it is that I am bold to think that morality is capable of demonstration, as well as mathematics” (3.11.16) to the end of the Preface to *Ethics* III: “Humanas actiones atque appetitus considerabo perinde, ac si quaestio de lineis, planis aut de corporibus esset.”
- (4.8) – And is it by chance that Locke explains the confused character of universal concepts by means of the same example ‘man’, and in that case exemplifies its various meanings not only by Plato’s and Aristotle’s definitions respectively, but also by the shape of “upright figure” (3.6.26; cf. *E* II, prop. 40 schol. 1: “erectae staturae”)?
- (4.9) – More than once Locke gives the same instance of highest certainty as Spinoza so often gave: “that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones” (4.1.2).
- (4.10) – One might also point to purely linguistic traces. The words “affection” and “to affect” for the impacts of bodies on my body is omnipresent in *An Essay*, whereas one does not find them, as far as I remember, in Drafts A and B.

⁴⁹ See my “In Defense of Spinoza”, *Studia Spinozana* 7 (1991), p. 205-223, section I: “Penuria verborum: a deficiency in language instead of Spinoza’s latinity”.

- (4.11) – The lowest degree of knowledge, called “faith” or “opinion” in the main presentation (4.2.14), is also very often indicated by the Spinozistic term “imagination” (e.g. 3.11.23, 4.4.1, 4.4.16). I suspect that indexical research will discover more linguistic similarities.
- (4.12) – Very striking is also the parallel between *KV* 2.16.4, in which Spinoza, having rejected the opinion that the will is a faculty or an existing thing (“zaak in de natuur”), concludes that “van haar niets veroorzaakt kan worden” and “men niet hoeft te vragen of de wil vry of niet vry is”, and *Essay* 2.21, in which Locke too rejects the faculty-hypothesis and draws the same conclusion: since the will is not a “distinct being” nor a “distinct agent” in us (§ 6), “the question itself [“whether man’s will be free or no”] is altogether improper” and “insignificant” (§ 14).⁵⁰

(5) In one of his Replies to imputations from Bishop Stillingfleet, Locke answered that he was “not so well read in Hobbes and Spinoza” and described the names of these persons as “justly decried”.⁵¹ I think, that our conclusion may be that he was better informed about Spinoza’s work and intentions than is suggested in this utterance, which may be interpreted as slightly disingenuous on account of the ruling public opinion. In my view the German student, Theodor Becker, hit the mark with the title of his doctoral dissertation, defended in Halle: *De philosophia Lockii et Humii, Spinozismi fructu, criticismi germinare*.⁵²

6) But, after all, it is not important whether Slocke’s epistemology stems from Spinoza, from other sources or from Locke’s brain. I was convinced by its truth value and have enjoyed it greatly. I hope that you can join me in this intellectual pleasure. Spinoza scholars can learn much from Locke’s lively and fascinating text, which is at least *congenial* with Spinoza’s *Ethics*.

⁵⁰ As a manuscript for Spinoza’s ‘inner circle’, the *Korte Verhandelng* circulated from 1662 onwards among his friends, some of whom were acquainted with Locke.

⁵¹ *Works* IV, p. 477.

⁵² Much earlier, William Carroll accused Locke of introducing Spinoza’s “atheistical hypothesis” (*A Dissertation* 1706, *Spinoza Reviv’d, Part I* 1709, *Part II* 1711). In his *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford, 1991) J.W. Yolton writes that the association between Spinozism and Locke was also made by at least one serious and well-informed writer in France”, namely Pierre Desmaizeaux. This appears from a few letters written in 1706-1707 by Barbeyrac to Desmaizeaux, which are kept in the British Museum. See also R. Andala, *Apologia pro vera et saniore Philosophia* (Franeker, 1718), p. 6: “Non pauca etiam Lockii [...] spinozistica fundamenta [...] detexi.”

EDWARD STILLINGFLEET AND SPINOZA

Sarah Hutton

Most philosophers have heard of Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, by virtue of the fact that he engaged in a lengthy public controversy with John Locke.¹ Since philosophical interest in this debate has focused on what Locke had to say in defence of his own philosophy, Stillingfleet's position, and the significance of the debate for his own theological agenda, have been largely ignored. It is therefore a little-known fact that in order to take up his pen against Locke, Stillingfleet interrupted a major project on which he was engaged: a new work of religious apologetics to replace his earlier *Origines sacrae* (1662).² The second work of apologetics was also entitled *Origines sacrae*,³ and aimed to address the relationship between

¹ For Stillingfleet's biography, see *The Life and Character of That Eminent and Learned Prelate Dr. Edward Stillingfleet, Lord Bishop of Worcester* (London, 1710), probably by Timothy Godwin, and also printed in *The Works of [...] Dr. Edward Stillingfleet* (London, 1707-1710), p. 1-46; *Dictionary of National Biography* s.v. "Stillingfleet, Edward"; R.T. Carroll, *The Common Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet* (The Hague, 1975). See also R.H. Popkin, "The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971), p. 303-319.

² Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines sacrae: or a Rational Account of the Grounds of the Christian Faith, as to the Truth and Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and the Matters therein Contained* (London, 1662). On the two versions of *Origines sacrae*, see my "Science, Philosophy and Atheism: Edward Stillingfleet's Defence of Religion" in: *Scepticism and Irreligion*, ed. R.H. Popkin & A. Vanderjagt (Leiden, 1993), p. 102-120 and my "Edward Stillingfleet, Henry Moore, and the Decline of *Moses Atticus*", in: *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England 1640-1700*, ed. R. Kroll, et al. (Cambridge, 1992), p. 68-84.

³ *Origines sacrae: or a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revealed Religion: wherein the Foundations of Religion and the Authority of the Scriptures, are Asserted and Clear'd with an Answer to the Modern Objections of Atheists and Deists*. This fragment was apparently written in 1697 and was first printed in Stillingfleet's collected *Works* (1707-1710), vol. 2. Stillingfleet laid aside this second version of *Origines Sacrae* when he commenced his controversy with John Locke. Among philosophers Stillingfleet is best known nowadays on account of his involvement in this controversy. But, since in the judgement of history and philosophy, he was the loser, it has earned him dubious fame. See, however the studies by R.H. Popkin and R.T. Carroll (see note 1), especially p. 86-100, and J.W. Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Oxford, 1956), p. 124-128 and 132-140.

philosophy and religion, giving particular attention to the new philosophies of the seventeenth century. Stillingfleet's death in 1699 brought to an end his controversy with Locke, and ensured that *Origines sacrae* (2) was never completed. As a result, we have been deprived of a full statement of Stillingfleet's arguments against Spinoza. Early in the work he announces that he will deal with Spinoza, "a person too well known in the world, (and whom I intend to consider at large afterwards)".⁴ But he never got further than chapter two.

Even so, Stillingfleet's writings do contain other references to Spinoza, from which we can learn a good deal, and from which it is possible to gauge the anti-Spinozist position he might have taken had he lived to complete *Origines sacrae* (2). And, although these references have nothing new or original about them in respect of the arguments they retail, they have importance firstly on account of Stillingfleet's standing as a leading churchman of his day, and secondly for the light they shed on the way in which philosophy was read and understood at the turn of the seventeenth century.

On the first point, Stillingfleet is important as the spokesman of late-seventeenth-century Anglicanism. He was one of the most popular Anglican preachers of the Restoration era and the leading theologian of the Latitudinarian ascendancy in the established church of William III's day. Consequently, his published views have all the authority of an official position, or party line, and are especially instructive in delineating the limits of the latitude or toleration of the Latitudinarians. In the latter part of his career, much of Stillingfleet's energy was taken up with facing the threat of Deism. His controversy with Locke was sparked by remarks he made in his campaign against the deists, principally John Toland.⁵ Thus it is in this deistic context that his remarks on Spinoza must be placed. And, indeed, as trustee of the Boyle lectures, he controlled the Church of England's

⁴ *Origines sacrae* (2), p. 430. All references to the two versions of this work are to the nineteenth-century edition: *Origines Sacrae or, a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revealed Religion* (Oxford, 1836), [editor unknown]. I shall refer to the first version as *Origines* (1) and to the second as *Origines* (2), giving volume and page numbers from this edition.

⁵ Stillingfleet attacks Toland's *Christianity not Mysteriorious* (London, 1696) in his *Discourse in Vindication of the Trinity* (London, 1697).

propaganda drive against the enemies of religion, a campaign that was as anti-deist as it was anti-Spinozist.⁶

In describing Stillingfleet as the ideological spokesman of the Church, it is important not to oversimplify the way in which his theological priorities dictated his reaction to contemporary philosophers. It is easy to dismiss him as a narrow-minded cleric, at best a philosophical reactionary, or, worse, just unable to handle philosophical arguments. Anyone who has read Locke's answers to him – or even his own letters to Locke—cannot fail to note the *apparent* obtuseness with which he insists on linking together Locke and Descartes on matters of epistemology, as proponents of the same 'way of ideas'. From an analytic point of view it is easy to dismiss his position as ignorant and uninformed. But as R.H. Popkin showed long ago, the image of Stillingfleet as a narrow-minded cleric simply does not hold. For he was remarkably up-to-date and well-read in contemporary philosophy.⁷ As a member of the Royal Society, an admirer of Robert Boyle and proponent of Newtonianism, he was at the forefront of intellectual life in the late seventeenth century.⁸ Since the evidence is that Stillingfleet's was not a closed and prejudiced mind, it is worth trying to understand his position, before condemning him as a poor philosopher. So, although there is much that is entirely predictable about his view of Spinoza, we should not dismiss what he has to say too lightly, particularly since, as I am going

⁶ The Boyle lectures were a series of sermons to be preached annually, endowed by Robert Boyle in his will in 1691. Their purpose was stipulated as, "for proving the Christian Religion, against notorious Infidels, viz Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, not descending lower to any Controversies among Christians themselves" (as quoted in M.C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Brighton, 1976), p. 144). Several had a specifically anti-Spinozan bias, for example those of Samuel Clarke (1704-1705), Francis Gastrell (1697), John Harris (1698), John Williams (1695-1696), Josiah Woodward (1710). See Rosalie Colie, "Spinoza in England", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963), p. 184-219. They were published in a collected edition entitled, *A Defence of Natural and Revealed Religion: Being a Collection of Sermons Preached at the Lectures Founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq; (from the Year 1691-1732)*, ed. Sampson Letsome & John Nicholl (London, 1739). On the Boyle lectures see J.J. Dahm, "Science and Apologetics in the Early Boyle Lectures", *Church History* 39 (1970), p. 172-186; G. Holmes, "Science, Reason and Religion in the Age of Newton", *British Journal for the History of Science* 11 (1978), p. 164-171.

⁷ Popkin, "The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet".

⁸ *Origines* (2) expresses very favourable opinions about Boyle and Newton. See Hutton, "Science, Philosophy and Atheism".

to argue, his remarks about Spinoza impinge on his evaluation of both Descartes and Locke. They may, therefore, help to shed light on his assessment of these philosophers.

Stillingfleet's discussion of Spinoza was part of a wider discussion of philosophy in general. In particular, Stillingfleet reads Spinoza in the context of Cartesianism. For him Spinozism was the prime example of the kind of aberration in religious doctrine to which Cartesianism could lead. Stillingfleet's view of Descartes was very much that of Henry More, whose letters to Descartes he cites in both versions of *Origines sacrae*. Rather like More, Stillingfleet originally held Descartes in esteem, but came to revise his view of Cartesianism on account of the atheism to which it apparently gave succour. In the view of both More and Stillingfleet, Descartes was no atheist and never sought to personally promote atheism, but his philosophy intrinsically inclined to atheism. In the hands of inadvertent or malicious persons, it could become the tool of atheism. Both regarded Spinoza as an example of a dangerous outgrowth from Cartesianism.⁹ But, when he cites Spinoza, Stillingfleet is not content simply to reproduce the caricature figure of Spinoza put about by his detractors, nor to accept the negative assessments of his critics on trust. On the contrary, the evidence is that he endeavoured to read Spinoza's writings, and to acquaint himself with the debates to which his philosophy gave rise.

The best evidence of this is Stillingfleet's personal library which survives intact to this day in Dublin, where it makes up the major part of Marsh's Library.¹⁰ There one can consult the very books that Stillingfleet himself used. Among the works of Spinoza, he owned the *Opera Posthuma* (1677) as well as the 1670 'Hamburg' edition of *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and *Renati des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae pars I & II*. His collection also contains a number of key texts

⁹ On Henry More's critique of Spinoza, see Rosalie Colie, "Spinoza in England" and *Light and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1957); S. Hutton, "Reason and Revelation in the Cambridge Platonists and their Reception of Spinoza", in: *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung*, ed. K. Gründer & W. Schmidt-Biggemann (Heidelberg, 1984), p. 181-200.

¹⁰ Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713), Archbishop of Armagh (1703) acquired Stillingfleet's collection of books after his death. This important collection of seventeenth-century books housed in the original purpose-built library building in St. Patrick's Close, Dublin, remains relatively unknown because there is no modern catalogue, printed or electronic. From the original hand-written catalogue it is possible to distinguish Stillingfleet's books from the rest of the collection.

in the Dutch debate about Spinozism: Lodewijk Meijer, *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres*, Frans Kuyper, *Arcana atheismi revelata*, Lambert van Velthuysen, *De Cultu naturali, oppositus Tractatui Theologico Politico & operi Posthumo Benedicti de Spinoza*, Christopher Wittich, *Anti Spinoza*, Johannes Bredenberg's *Enervatio*, as well as Aubert de Versé, *L'impie convaincu*, and Pierre Yvon, *L'impiété convaincue*.¹¹ We cannot be sure how extensively Stillingfleet read the anti-Spinoza literature, because he was a great respecter of the huge number of books that he owned and did not annotate them. But that he did read Spinoza's works is borne out by the quotations he makes and the level of discussion of Spinoza in his writings.

Spinoza's name figures a couple of times in Stillingfleet's controversy with Locke. Once he mentions Spinoza to illustrate the theological dangerousness of the view that matter is endowed with the power of cogitation. In another place Spinoza is mentioned in passing as exemplifying the connection between the threat to religion and morality and the doctrine that thinking is a mode of matter.¹² And in his *Answer to Mr Locke's Second Letter*, Stillingfleet makes reference to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, thereby linking Locke to Spinoza: Locke's principles, he writes, give us no grounds of certainty about the prerequisites or propositions of faith (such as the existence of God, or whether there are any principles above matter and motion). On Locke's view, what we take to be revealed truth may be no more than mere enthusiasm, the product of our imaginations, "all Revelation may be nothing but the Effects of an exalted Fancy, or the Heats of a disordered Imagination, as Spinoza affirmed".¹³ (This comment is quoted twice by Locke in *Mr Locke's*

¹¹ B.D.S. *Opera posthuma* (no publisher or place of publication), 1677, *Tractatus theologico politicus* (Hamburgi apud Henricum Künnraht, 1670); [Frans Kuyper], *Arcana atheismi revelata, philosophice & paradoxe refutato, examine tractatus theologico-politici* (Rotterdam, 1676); Lambert van Velthuysen, *De Cultu naturali*, in: *Lamberti Velthuysei Ultrajacteni Operum, pars secunda* (Rotterdam, 1680); *Christoph. Wittichi Anti Spinoza sive examen ethices Benedicti de Spinoza* (Amsterdam, 1690); Joannes Bredenburg, *Enervatio tractatus theologico-politici* (Rotterdam, 1675); [N.A. de Versé], *L'impie convaincue, ou dissertation contre Spinoza*, (Amsterdam, 1685); Pierre Yvon, *L'impiété convaincue en deux traités, dont [...] le second contient la défense de l'Ecriture Sainte par l'entière réfutation du livre impie de Spinoza nommé Traité Théologique-Politique* (Amsterdam, 1681).

¹² *The Bishop of Worcester's Answer to Mr Locke's Letter concerning Some Passages Relating to his Essay of Humane Understanding* (London, 1697), p. 79.

¹³ *The Bishop of Worcester's Answer to Mr Locke's Second Letter wherein his notion of Ideas is proved to be Inconsistent with itself and with the Articles of the Christian Faith* (London, 1698), p. 30.

Second Reply to the Bishop of Worcester, though Locke makes no comment on Spinoza.¹⁴)

In addition to these rather generalised references to Spinoza, Stillingfleet quotes his words verbatim in a sermon which he never published and which is now preserved in the library of St John's College, Cambridge. This contains a brief discussion of the implications for Bible criticism of Richard Simon's *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament* and Spinoza's *Tractatus*, including two quotations from the latter, both of which concern prophecy.¹⁵

So also with *Origines sacrae* (2): the discussion of Spinoza includes quotations from both the *Ethica* and *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*. It is this work which, even in its truncated form, contains the most extensive discussion of Spinoza. The particular passages on which he focuses are the Appendix to *Ethics*, I, and the discussion of the highest good at the beginning of *De Intellectus Emendatione*.

Stillingfleet's discussion of Spinoza in *Origines sacrae* (2) forms an addendum to his discussion of Descartes. From this it is apparent that he regarded Spinozism as an outgrowth of Cartesianism. (In fact he describes Spinoza as "a strict follower of Des Cartes's notions in his Metaphysical Meditations"¹⁶). Stillingfleet's critique of Cartesianism is the centre-piece of his discussion of the atheistical implications of contemporary philosophy which takes up the second chapter of *Origines sacrae* (2). In this Stillingfleet classifies "the atheistical hypotheses of this age" under two heads: "1. Such as have a tendency towards atheism. 2. Such as are plainly atheistical". Of the former, he concentrates on two types of "hypothesis" – "Such as weaken the known and generally received proofs of God and Providence [and] Such as attribute too much to the mechanical powers of matter and motion".¹⁷ The discussion of Descartes falls under the first type of the first hypothesis—namely philosophies that undermine traditional arguments for proving the existence of God and divine providence.

The last part of Stillingfleet's critique of Cartesianism is devoted to the matter of final causes, and it is on this subject that he takes

¹⁴ Locke, *Works* (London, 1823; repr. Aalen, 1963), 10 vols., IV, p. 293 and 240.

¹⁵ St John's College, Cambridge, MS O.81, from which extracts are printed in Gerard Reedy, S.J., *The Bible and Reason. Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-century England* (Philadelphia, 1985), Appendix 1.

¹⁶ *Origines* (2), p. 430.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

issue with Spinoza. Stillingfleet challenges Spinoza's assertion that final causes are "mere fictions of men's brains".¹⁸ He takes his reader through the stages of Spinoza's argument against final causes in the *Ethics* and tries to undermine each one. To the claim that belief in final causes derives from a combination of human ignorance and human self-interest, Stillingfleet quibbles that Spinoza has failed to show that there are other causes besides those we are aware of from our own perceptions. He also argues that Spinoza wrongly reduces all ends to mere human self-interest or "profit". Furthermore, Spinoza by his own example shows that we act for ends that cannot be described as mere "profit": in his devotion to his studies, Spinoza was not motivated by mere self-interest or the material benefit he might accrue from them, but, on his own admission, his purpose was "finding the true good of mankind".¹⁹ Spinoza's inconsistency is further apparent in his use of the vocabulary of finalism in his account of human motivation. It is therefore disingenuous of Spinoza to refuse to extend this manner of speaking to God.

Having, as he thinks, shown up inconsistencies in Spinoza's way of arguing, Stillingfleet proceeds next to refute his claim that "*final causes are repugnant to the nature of things*". Against Spinoza's contention that final causes impugn the perfection of the deity because they imply a supposedly perfect being is lacking in something, Stillingfleet contends that perfection entails altruistic goodness, "the more perfect any being is, the greater is the beneficence and readiness to do good to others".²⁰ To Spinoza's point that God operates for His own glory and not for the glory of men, Stillingfleet responds that "the glory of God" and "the good of his creatures" are intertwined since the former is best promoted by the latter. Finally, Stillingfleet turns to Spinoza's contention that belief in final causation arises from ignorance of causes and misplaced homocentricity, in consequence of which our criteria of good and evil, of right and wrong, and even our sense awareness are false, being founded in men's imaginations. Stillingfleet interprets this argument as a statement of belief on Spinoza's part, rather than a diagnosis of error. In consequence he regards Spinoza as a relativist in point of morals. In reply he draws a distinction between utility and moral goodness,

¹⁸ *Origenes* (2), p. 431.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 438.

denying that the good is to be equated with what is useful or practically beneficial for mankind. Rather, moral virtues, such as justice, loyalty, honesty, obedience, exist independently of human imaginations. Good and evil, writes Stillingfleet, depend not upon the arbitrary fancies and opinions of men, but on the nature of things, the reason of mankind, and the respects they stand to in relation to one another. Moreover, in that they are necessary for preserving human society, they are implicitly end-directed. There is a real tendency in these things to that end, i.e. the preservation of human society. This argument is not simply a *consensus gentium* argument but it is politically conservative. Public good overrides the private. The 'common interest' is paramount as the good to which all our actions should be directed:

men's due government of themselves doth as naturally tend to peace and tranquility as withdrawing fuel, or casting water, doth to quench the violence of fire. From whence it doth appear that there are real ends as to mankind, which are the measures of good and evil with respect to society.²¹

Thus for Stillingfleet, as for Spinoza, there is an indissoluble link between human virtue and final causes, but the difference between the two is that for Spinoza such end-directed virtue is an illusion of virtue, founded on a misconceived, because homocentric, idea of the good. Belief in final causes is thus a sure mark of the spuriousness of such virtue. For Stillingfleet, the obverse is true: final causality is part of the nature of things and to deny final causes is to ignore the evidence of nature that its orderliness implies a guiding creator. Rejection of finalism is therefore a clear symptom of an atheistic turn of mind.

Although the issue of final causes was probably only a minor part of Stillingfleet's projected critique of Spinoza, in relation to his own programme final causality was of immense importance. For it would appear that a major aim of *Origines sacrae* (2) was to update the argument from design, in order to strengthen arguments for divine providence.²² For Stillingfleet, Christian apologetics had not only to demonstrate the existence of God, but to demonstrate the existence of a providential God, who regulates the course of history and plays a part in the conduct of human affairs. The God of the philosophers

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

²² See Hutton "Science, Philosophy and Atheism".

was therefore insufficient: instead he turned to the God of the scientists, or rather, natural philosophers. Unlike its eponymous predecessor, *Origines sacrae* (2) draws heavily on the findings of contemporary observational science as part of the argument for a providential deity.²³ It is notable that in his discussion of Spinoza in this work, he disparages Spinoza's geometrical method of argument: "so much blustering talk of geometry, and so very little appearance of true reason".²⁴ Underlying Stillingfleet's scorn for reasoning *more geometrico* is his own preference for a method of philosophical enquiry which relies on demonstration from the external world. The organisational structure of human bodies, plants and animals, is a source of evidence to which we may appeal in order to avoid being trapped in the solipsism of the "geometrical way of demonstration".²⁵ Stillingfleet's use of the design argument is an exact example of the kind of reasoning which Spinoza describes when explaining how mispersuasion as to the existence of final causes has come about. I quote Stillingfleet's translation of a relevant passage from *Ethics* I:

mankind finding something very useful to them, as eyes for seeing, teeth for eating, herbs and animals to give nourishment, the sea to breed fish, &c. and because they are so useful to them, conclude that there was a Being above them, which prepared all these things for them.²⁶

In response to this Stillingfleet can only concur with the method of inference described. If, on examining the world around us, we note its functionalism and conclude that this was all arranged by a supernatural creator, "what absurdity is there in so doing?" he asks. "We find *eyes fitted for sight, teeth for eating etc.* And why, I pray, may we not in reason conclude that they were designed for that use?"²⁷ To judge by his reactions, we can see that Stillingfleet is a prime example of the kind of imagination-driven thinking that Spinoza derides. In Spinoza's analysis there is an inevitable link between such a cast

²³ On this aspect of *Origines* (2), see my "Science, Philosophy and Atheism". The list of contemporary scientific authorities cited by Stillingfleet in *Origines* (2) is very similar to that of Richard Bentley in the first series of Boyle lectures, *A Confutation of Atheism from the Structure of Human Bodies* (London, 1652) and *A Confutation of Atheism from the Origin and Frame of the World* (London, 1693).

²⁴ *Origines* (2), p. 438.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

of mind and finalism. Stillingfleet can see no other conclusion to draw from the examples Spinoza itemises than finalist ones. Indeed, he follows this with a perfectly anthropomorphic account of divine providence—

If it be wisdom to act for an end, and folly to act for none, why may we not suppose an infinitely wise Being to act for ends agreeable to himself? Not for mean, foolish, sordid ends, but such as become the great Creator, and wise Governor, and Bountiful Benefactor to mankind.²⁸

I have suggested that Stillingfleet probably read Spinoza more attentively than many of his other detractors. But how far and how disinterestedly is another question. As I have already indicated, his library catalogue suggests that he was certainly in a position to be well informed about Spinoza and Spinozist debates. But his brief discussion of Spinoza on final causes gives no clues as to the critical literature which he actually consulted. In this respect it is in obvious contrast to Stillingfleet's discussion of Descartes in *Origines* (2), where he cites many of Descartes' critics and proponents. Furthermore, for all his close reading of Spinoza's actual words, Stillingfleet is not free from the kinds of prejudice that helped his contemporaries caricature Spinoza as a white devil. He certainly does not refrain from the easy charge of disingenuity. After quoting Spinoza's own words on one occasion, he observes, "This one would think were spoken like a true Christian philosopher: but his way is to use our expressions, and to couch his own meaning under very plausible terms".²⁹

Stillingfleet is, himself, guilty of disingenuousness: for, when Spinoza argues that reliance on finalist arguments results in ethical relativism and makes the human imagination judge of good and evil, Stillingfleet imputes this position to Spinoza, and treats it as a tenet of his philosophy rather than as the outcome of a finalist position, as Spinoza had actually argued. He makes this anti-Spinozistic deduction because he himself sets great store by arguments for divine providence, as well as holding that good and evil are founded in "a true and just measure of things".

In reviewing the partiality or impartiality with which Stillingfleet read Spinoza, we should observe that in *Origines sacrae* (2) Stil-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 436. Another anthropomorphic comparison used by Stillingfleet is of a father making provision for his son. *Ibid.*, p. 437.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

lingfleet distinguishes between philosophies that are not “plainly atheistical” but “have a tendency towards atheism”, placing Cartesianism in the second category. On the face of it, therefore, by linking Spinoza with Descartes, Stillingfleet classifies him as a theist. In view of the prevailing equation of Spinozism and atheism at the time, this is a remarkable category for an English churchman of the seventeenth-century to give him. If the case rested solely on the issue of final causality, we might be justified in concluding that this was Stillingfleet’s preferred classification of Spinoza. But the case is not so simple. Anticipating the drift of discussions planned for later in the book, Stillingfleet notes that “the impiety of his system must be considered in its proper place”.³⁰ And at the opening of his discussion of Spinoza’s rejection of final causes, he notes that the Cartesian doctrines that have done so much to nurture Spinoza’s errors are, firstly, “the argument from the idea” to prove the existence of God—an argument which Spinoza perverted in order “to prove the *world to be God*”—and, secondly, *Principia* 2.21, which proposes “*the idea of extended matter to be infinite and necessary*”.³¹ Stillingfleet also proposes to discuss at a later stage what he calls Spinoza’s “argument *from the necessity of all things*”. This, he says “must be referred to its due time”.³² We may conclude, therefore, that Stillingfleet imputed to Spinoza the same materialist errors that had been identified by the likes of Henry More, and that this was to be the subject of his discussion of Spinoza projected for the unwritten part of his book. No doubt Spinozism would have featured not as merely a philosophy which tended to atheism, but one which was “plainly atheistical”. What we have in *Origines sacrae* (2) is only part of Stillingfleet’s projected discussion of Spinoza, and it would seem that we have only the minor part. The core of Spinoza’s atheism had yet to be exposed by Stillingfleet in later sections of the work which he did not live to write.

The evidence of Stillingfleet’s library is that he was well equipped to do the research necessary for a thorough examination of the arguments for and against Spinoza. But it would, I think, be futile to try to reconstruct the full-blown critique of Spinoza which Stillingfleet had projected. Nonetheless I think we can draw some conclusions

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 438.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 437.

about what Spinoza represented for Stillingfleet. Spinoza was not simply a bogey-man atheist whose example gave encouragement to the likes of John Toland. Rather, Spinoza's philosophy served as a confirmation of systematic errors in philosophy. Spinozism was therefore a symptom rather than a cause of what was wrong with philosophy. It was, in other words, an illustration of how philosophy could result in atheism. As I noted earlier, the particular philosophy of which Stillingfleet regarded Spinozism as an outgrowth was Cartesianism. "Descartes", writes Stillingfleet, "cannot be excused from giving too great advantage to Spinoza, by supposing *the idea of extended matter to be infinite and necessary*; which overthrows the force of his own argument from the idea".³³ To see how Stillingfleet makes this derivation of Spinozism from Cartesianism there are clues in his controversy with Locke. Let me return to quote more fully one of the passages in which he refers to Spinoza in the course of that correspondence. Arguing the need for "some antecedent Principles" before we can judge of "Matters of Revelation", Stillingfleet states that the first such principle must be "that there is a God". But, he goes on,

this was the very thing he [Descartes] found himself at a loss in by his way of *Certainty by Ideas*; and how can his own faith stand firm as to Divine Revelation, when he is made Uncertain by his own Way, whether there be a God or no? Besides, to suppose Divine Revelation we must be certain there is a Principle above Matter and Motion in the World; but here we find, that upon the Principles of Certainty by Ideas he cannot be certain of this; because he cannot be certain but that Matter may think, and consequently all Revelation may be nothing but the Effects of an Exalted Fancy, or the Heats of a disordered Imagination, as Spinoza affirmed.³⁴

In other words, the lack of adequate grounds of certainty for his clear and distinct ideas means that there are no epistemological checks on what may be deduced from Descartes' 'way of ideas'. Such free-floating ideas are mere figments of the mind, not objectively connected to anything actually existing outside the mind. There is nothing to prevent a chain of deductions (*more geometrico*) from reaching false conclusions, such as that matter is infinitely extended, that matter might think, and that God might be a material being. Spinoza is living proof, to Stillingfleet, of such an outcome.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

³⁴ Stillingfleet, "Answer to Mr. Locke's Second Letter", *Works* III, p. 570.

Spinoza's materialistic pantheism (that is, materialism as Stillingfleet saw it) results from an elementary failure in his system: a failure to lay the grounds of certainty, a failure in epistemology. It is the same epistemological objection (though with rather different consequences) that Stillingfleet brings against Locke. This is how Stillingfleet brings Spinoza and Locke into relation with one another—not because he is too obtuse to see that their systems are entirely different, but because both exhibit a similar basic flaw.

It goes without saying that Stillingfleet's own grounds of certainty are not immune from criticism—indeed it was justly pointed out by Leibniz that he did not adequately demonstrate his own principles. But it is not my concern to debate that issue here. I would, however, emphasise that Stillingfleet did not reject *all* philosophy, but only certain philosophical systems. I would also argue that the fact that the suspect systems made up most of what philosophers nowadays take to be important in seventeenth-century philosophy (Descartes, Hobbes and Spinoza) does not by itself mean that he was a philosophical dinosaur. Rather, as *Origines sacrae* (2) shows, he took pains to try to distinguish the good from the bad, sound from unsound philosophy. And, importantly, he tried to differentiate between them not simply in terms of theologically acceptable doctrines (such as that the world was created by God) but also in terms of their internal coherence as systems. As a thinker, therefore, Stillingfleet should be viewed less as a philosophical bumbler, than as the product of a distinctively English school of philosophical theology, the roots of which may be traced back to the Cambridge Platonists, who were, as Gilbert Burnet put it, the fathers of the latitudinarian movement.³⁵ One of the clearest representatives of the philosophical theology of this school is John Ray's *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation*.³⁶ And of the Cambridge school, the one with whom Stillingfleet can best be compared is Ralph Cudworth. Stillingfleet and Cudworth share not just a humanist penchant for antiquarian-

³⁵ Gilbert Burnet, *History of my own Time*, ed. O. Airy (Oxford, 1897), vol. 1, p. 334-335. First published 1723-1724.

³⁶ See Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (London, 1691). Ray acknowledges his debt to both Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. He draws from More's *Antidote against Atheisme* to reinforce the argument from design. See Robert Crocker, "Henry More: a Biographical Essay", in: *Henry More (1614-1687): Tercentenary Studies*, ed. S. Hutton (Dordrecht, 1989), p. 11. On Ray, see C.E. Raven, *John Ray, Naturalist* (Cambridge, 1986; 2nd ed.).

ism, but a desire to accommodate modern philosophy to theology. Stillingfleet may not have shared Cudworth's Platonism and he certainly did not espouse Cudworth's philosophy of spirit, though his argument "that there must be something above Matter and Motion in the World" is pure Cudworth. He shared Cudworth's preference for *consensus gentium* arguments, and his emphasis on teleology, in particular the argument from design. Both Cudworth and Stillingfleet were concerned to prove not just the existence of God, but the providential character of the deity. The great project of Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* was to distinguish good philosophical systems from bad, by connecting atheism with false epistemology. *Origines sacrae* (2) carries on the same project.

To conclude: although we do not have every word that Stillingfleet might have written about the philosophy of Spinoza, we can learn much about the particular context into which it was received. And that in turn may help us to understand how systems of thought evolve and find their place, how they impinge on and diverge from one another. My account of Stillingfleet's encounter with Spinoza probably tells us more about Stillingfleet, in objective terms, than it does about Spinoza. Nonetheless it is an encounter which affirms the radicalism of Spinoza's system of philosophy in its seventeenth-century context, and the challenge it presented to established philosophical frameworks.

MATTER AND MOTION: TOLAND AND SPINOZA*

Rienk Vermij

"For my part, I shall always be far from saying that Spinoza did nothing well, because in many things he succeeded so ill. On the contrary, he has had several lucky Thoughts, and appears to have bin a Man of admirable natural Endowments, tho his share of Learning (except in some parts of the Mathematicks, and in the understanding of the Rabbins) seems to have bin very moderate."¹ As one may presume from this quotation, John Toland (1670-1722) knew the works of Spinoza. In any case, he had studied the *Opera Posthuma*. There is no direct evidence that he knew the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, although this seems probable *a priori*; indeed, Toland deals with similar themes in an equivalent manner.² But the quotation also shows that Toland's attitude with regard to Spinoza was not unambiguous.

Toland and Spinoza were in a way kindred spirits. Toland is well known as one of the early English Deists, although, in fact, he was an Irishman and did not like the term 'Deist' at all. He deliberately upheld a 'pantheist' philosophy—indeed, Toland is the person who coined the term 'pantheist'. Moreover, he sometimes used the terms 'pantheist' and 'Spinozist' interchangeably.³ Still, in his *Letters to Serena* he undertook to prove that "the whole System of Spinoza is not only false, but also precarious and without any sort of Foundation."⁴ This criticism is the subject of the present paper.

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¹ John Toland, *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704; repr. New York-London, 1976), p. 133. For similar statements in some other works by Toland, see R.L. Colie, "Spinoza and the Early English Deists", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), p. 45.

² P. Lurbe, "Le spinozisme de John Toland", in: *Spinoza au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. O. Bloch (Paris, 1990), p. 33-47, esp. p. 34-38.

³ R.E. Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy. A Study in Adaptations* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1982), p. 193. See, on Toland's pantheism, also P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1954), p. 355-360.

⁴ Toland, *Letters to Serena*, p. 135.

THE LETTERS TO SERENA

The *Letters to Serena* were conceived sometime around 1702, while Toland was travelling in Holland and Germany and discussing his ideas with Leibniz. The book was published in 1704 and consists of five long letters. In fact, it seems better to speak of essays in epistolary form, since there is no proof that the "letters" had ever been part of a real correspondence. The first three letters are directed to "Serena", whom Toland later claimed to be Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia, although this claim is rather dubious. The first letter is also preserved in another version, apparently a first draft, published in Dutch in 1710, in which it appears directed to an anonymous English lord.⁵ This first letter deals with "the origin and force of prejudices", the second with "the history of the soul's immortality among the heathens", and the third with "the origins of idolatry, and reasons of heathenism". These three letters contain nothing with respect to Spinoza.

The fourth letter is directed to "a Gentleman in Holland". According to the foreword, this unnamed person was "an excessive admirer of Spinoza, one wholly addicted to his Principles, and reputed the best of any to understand his System." I feel quite sure that this Gentleman was just a literary fiction, so it would be wasting time to speculate about his identity. In this letter, Toland allegedly showed "Spinoza's system of Philosophy to be without any Principle or Foundation". According to the preface, he easily convinced his correspondent, a detail that, in my view, does not make the story appear more realistic. However, the story continues, "the Confutation of Spinoza" being circulated among the Dutch Spinozists, Toland received a rejoinder from another person, this time described as "a Gentleman, no less illustrious for his excellent Learning than his noble Family". As a reply to this gentleman, who undoubtedly was as imponderable as the former, Toland wrote his fifth letter: "Motion essential to Matter; in Answer to some Remarks by a noble Friend on the Confutation of Spinoza."

As can be seen from this overview, the fourth and fifth letters should be seen in connection. And, as the central theme is matter

⁵ R.H. Vermij, "Tolands eerste brief aan Serena. Een episode uit de geschiedenis van het deïsme in Nederland", *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw* 21 (1989), p. 13-22.

and motion, the theory of motion having been a basic element of 17th century natural philosophy, a short excursus seems in place here.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND: THEORIES OF MOTION

Descartes had reduced all natural phenomena to matter in motion. Thus, matter and motion were the basic elements in Cartesian physics. Moreover, Descartes had changed the concept of motion itself. In Aristotelianism, the term 'motion' denoted a number of phenomena which, according to the modern view, have little in common: alteration, accretion, diminution, generation, corruption (though the latter two not according to all philosophers), and finally, local motion. Only this local motion corresponds to our present idea of motion, that is to say, more or less. The Aristotelians, after all, considered this 'local motion' in a decidedly unmodern way. First of all, it was conceived of as final. All motion presupposes an end towards which it strives. Secondly, motion needs an external cause. Without such a cause, the moved object will stop moving and come to rest. This means, thirdly, that motion and rest are conceived of as absolute.

Descartes reduced all motion, indeed all phenomena in the world, to local motion, the only kind of motion Descartes recognised. Moreover, the Cartesian concept of motion (local motion) was very different from the Aristotelian. For one thing, motion is only relative: it is defined with respect to other bodies. A body may move with respect to another body and be at rest with respect to a third. In these circumstances, it no longer makes sense to look for an end. Another consequence is the principle of inertia: left to itself, a body will keep moving in a straight line with constant velocity. (This velocity may be zero. In that case, we say the body remains at rest.) One needs as much force to start a movement as to stop it.⁶

Descartes was not completely original in this respect. Similar

⁶ A judicious exposition of the Cartesian theory of motion is to be found in P. van der Hoeven, "Over Spinoza's interpretatie van de cartesische fysica, en de betekenis daarvan voor het systeem der *Ethica*", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 35 (1973), p. 27-86, see esp. p. 37-65 *passim*. An elaborate treatment is also to be found in D. Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago-London, 1992).

ideas were developed by other 'mechanical' philosophers as well—by Galileo, Hobbes,⁷ and Beeckman.⁸ Its main result was that motion became 'mathematicised', that is, it became much more of a mathematical than a physical (philosophical) concept. Subsequently, it was above all mathematicians who elaborated the further consequences of these new ideas. Christiaan Huygens rigorously applied the principle of classical relativity to collision phenomena, which led to his work *De motu corporum ex percussione*, written in 1652-1656, but published in 1669 (and then only in part). In this work, he showed the inadequacy of the rules Descartes had given for these phenomena and formulated the laws of percussion in the way they are still taught today.⁹

Huygens did not fail to impress his contemporaries; that is to say, the mathematicians among them. Philosophers appear to have remained largely aloof from developments in mathematics. They continued to discuss motion in a philosophical, almost scholastic way, thereby missing the real innovations of such as Huygens' work. Their problems with his work may partially have been of a conceptual nature, since the principle of inertia appeared to wipe out the distinction between motion and rest: "It was [...] difficult to acquiesce in a conception of motion that tended to obscure its very existence".¹⁰ Partially, too, the problems may have arisen from disciplinary boundaries, which made it difficult for philosophers to appreciate the significance of work done in another field of knowledge, in this case mathematics.

Another source of confusion lay in Descartes' work. Descartes had introduced the new concept of motion, but he had done so in a rather inconsistent way. First, he limited the idea of relativity for practical purposes: motion is defined with respect to other bodies

⁷ On the relation between Hobbes and Descartes in this respect: F. Brandt, *Thomas Hobbes' Mechanical Conception of Nature* (Copenhagen-London, 1928), p. 132-142. Th.A. Spagens jr., *The Politics of Motion. The World of Thomas Hobbes* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1973) offers a description of the importance of the new mechanical ideas in Hobbes' philosophical thought in general.

⁸ K. van Berkel, *Isaac Beeckman (1588-1637) en de mechanisering van het wereldbeeld* (Amsterdam, 1983), p. 187-199.

⁹ G. Mormino, *Penetralia motus. La fondazione relativistica della meccanica in Christiaan Huygens, con l'edizione del Codex Hugenorum 7a* (Firenze, 1933).

¹⁰ E.G. Ruestow, *Physics at 17th and 18th-Century Leiden. Philosophy and the New Science in the University* (The Hague, 1973), p. 143. The concept of motion as taught at Leiden is one of the main themes of Ruestow's book.

which we consider to be at rest. Secondly, he did not grasp the full implications of relativity of motion, as becomes particularly clear in his laws of collision, which are incompatible with this very principle.¹¹ Thirdly, according to Descartes, God has endowed the world with motion, and he keeps the quantity of this 'motion' constant. Maybe this is not really a contradiction with his relativistic definition of motion, but since Descartes is not clear what exactly has been 'given', he seems to return to the concept of absolute motion.¹²

Accordingly, in philosophy after Descartes, confusion reigned as to the exact nature of motion—still a basic element in natural philosophy, even if the issue had long been reduced to a non-problem by the mathematicians. Cartesian philosophers developed several points of view in order to clarify the concept. The ensuing discussions were essentially metaphysical in nature, their physical relevance being generally very limited. For convenience's sake, I shall list some of the main positions, although in reality the various opinions were less clear-cut. Hardly any philosopher seems to have realised that Descartes' ideas were inconsistent. Small wonder, then, that they were often not very consistent themselves.

1. Traditionally, of course, rest was conceived of as simply the privation of motion, while motion, on the contrary, was considered to be a definite entity. Rest and motion were thus taken absolutely. This idea looms in the background of much philosophical work of the period (for instance in the work of the Leiden professor De Raei¹³), even if people did not always make it explicit.

2. Complete relativity of motion was upheld by the Leiden professors Geulincx and De Volder.¹⁴ However, this appears to have been a purely philosophical position. There is no indication that either of them had a notion of the wider consequences of their position, seen from a mathematical point of view. This is particularly striking in the case of De Volder, who was a mathematician himself and who knew Huygens personally. But De Volder seems always to have clung to Descartes' laws of impact, which Huygens had disproved.

¹¹ Cf. Mormino, *Penetralia motus*, p. 24; Ruestow, *Physics at Leiden*, p. 68.

¹² Another complication, which I pass over, was the different treatment of the motion of bodies taken as 'isolated' and as moving in a fluid medium.

¹³ Ruestow, *Physics at Leiden*, p. 67-68.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84-87.

3. Another way of taking motion and rest as absolute was to take them as equivalent, but opposite entities. Rest was not just the privation of motion, it was a positive quality in itself. This idea was at least played with, in some form or another, among the Cartesians at Leiden university. Its best-known defence is the Leiden thesis of Spinoza's friend Lodewijk Meijer, from 1660,¹⁵ although, as Thijssen-Schoute has shown, some other Leiden theses from about the same time upheld a similar view.¹⁶

4. A fourth position reduces everything to motion. The existence of rest is denied, and motion is taken absolutely as, in some way, a constitutive element of matter. This idea is hardly Cartesian any more, since Descartes' principal innovation, the reduction of the concept of motion to local motion, is abandoned. This seems to have been the position of Cuffeler, Tschirnhaus and Overcamp;¹⁷ it was certainly the position of Toland.

Before investigating Toland's ideas, however, it may be worth while to have a closer look at those of Spinoza. The problem is that Spinoza, as Toland was later to point out, is rather vague as regards his precise ideas. Of course, there is no doubt that Spinoza was deeply influenced by Descartes' physics. It is also clear that he did not grasp the significance of relativity of motion and rejected Huygens' laws of collision.¹⁸ Motion and rest remained absolute entities to him, but it is rather difficult to ascertain Spinoza's concept of 'rest'.¹⁹ It appears that this was not just a mere nothing, a privation of movement. It had a certain positive quality more or less in the fashion of Meijer.²⁰ It seems that in his formative years Spinoza,

¹⁵ C.L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme* (1954; repr. Utrecht, 1989), p. 380-381.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 385-386. For places in Descartes' works which could give rise to this interpretation, cf. Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics*, p. 163-164.

¹⁷ See, on their positions, Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, p. 313, 379-380 and W.N.A. Klever, "Zwaarte. Een polemie in de zeventiende eeuw", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 52 (1990), p. 297-299, p. 302-310.

¹⁸ Cf. Van der Hoeven, "Over Spinoza's interpretatie van de cartesische fysica", p. 59-60.

¹⁹ It is discussed by Van der Hoeven, "Over Spinoza's interpretatie van de cartesische fysica", p. 50-51. Compare p. 43 for Descartes' view.

²⁰ Recently, W. Klever pointed out that according to Spinoza, motion and rest are equivalent as they can both be reduced to the same external causes. This is true as regards motion (and rest) of bodies in a fluid medium, but these rules are treated only after Spinoza (like Descartes) has exposed the more fundamental laws of motion of 'isolated' bodies, which concern us here. Klever, "Zwaarte. Een polemie in de

too, was influenced by contemporary academic discussions on the concepts of motion and rest. This is not surprising, considering Spinoza's link with Meijer, who wrote the preface to Spinoza's *Renati des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae pars I & II, more geometrico demonstrata* in 1663, only three years after he had written his above-mentioned thesis. In this exposition of Cartesian philosophy (mainly physics), Spinoza consistently dealt with motion and rest on an equal footing. He even used a concept like 'quantity of rest' (*Ethics* II, prop. 22) or sentences like "Quo corpora tardius moventur, eo magis de quiete participant" (*ibid.*, cor.). It is hard to attach a meaning to such expressions, unless one considers rest something similar, but not identical, to motion. Spinoza's treatment of motion does not take account of its new mathematical character. Compared to Descartes, motion, instead of a physical concept, became metaphysical again.

TOLAND ON MOTION

Toland's criticism of Spinoza can be reduced to the following. Since Descartes, it had been an accepted principle of philosophy that the whole of nature consisted of matter in motion, that all change in the natural world had its origins in the movement of material particles. Matter and motion were first principles and as such the principal subject of natural philosophy. According to Descartes, *Matter* was identical with extension. It was *per se* no more (or less) inclined to movement than to rest. This matter was endowed with *Motion* but, since matter itself was passive, this motion had been communicated to it from outside. The ultimate source of the motion in the universe was the transcendent God.

Spinoza upheld the main tenets of Descartes' physics. For him, too, matter and motion were basic principles. But he did not believe in a transcendent God. Descartes' idea of God endowing a passive universe with motion was unacceptable to him. Toland, of course, was well aware of this. The question he therefore asked was how Spinoza accounted for the presence of motion in the universe. How did Spinoza define the concept of motion—a basic concept in his philosophy? The answer, he found, was that Spinoza did not define it at

zeventiende eeuw" and "Moles in Motu. Principles of Spinoza's Physics", *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988), p. 185.

all: "Spinoza has no where in his System attempted to define Motion or Rest, which is unpardonable in a Philosopher, whether done with or without design".²¹ Spinoza's treatment of motion even ran into contradictions: he was not able to indicate a cause for motion, and still was of the opinion that matter was naturally inactive.²² Without a clear idea of motion, Spinoza "cou'd not possibly show how the Diversity of particular Bodys is reconcilable to the Unity of Substance, or to the Sameness of Matter in the whole Universe: wherefore I may safely conclude that his System is intirely precarious and without any sort of ground, indigested and unphilosophical."²³

Toland thought he could do better. According to him, "we must distinguish between local Motion and the moving Force or Action: for local Motion is only a Change of Situation [...] this Motion is nothing different from the Body it self, nor any real Being in Nature, but a mere Mode or Consideration of its Situation, and the Effect of some Force or Action without or whithin the Body."²⁴

Having shown what motion is (at least to his satisfaction), Toland proceeds to show that, starting from this definition, one can solve Spinoza's problem simply by taking motion as essential to matter. Motion need not be communicated to the world from outside. Descartes' definition was defective: "Matter is necessarily active as well as extended", and "all the Matter in Nature, every Part and Parcel of it, has bin ever in motion, and can never be otherwise".²⁵ Of course, all this does not affect local motion, but the underlying Force or Action. Toland agrees that the world of motion as treated by the mathematicians is the world of local motion. Philosophers, however, "all those who have treated of the Diversities that happen in Matter", should pertain to deeper layers of explanation and deal with the cause of local motion, with "Force" or "Action".²⁶

How the various local, discernable motions are dependent upon this Action is a problem Toland does not really touch upon. Nor does he give any real argument for his theory. His only argument seems to be an analogy, that between body and motion. Bodies are modifications of matter taken as extension: the whole universe is

²¹ Toland, *Letters to Serena*, p. 144.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 143-144; see also p. 138-139.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164, 167.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

one, a plenum of homogeneous matter, but the mind conceives it as divided. Now, as this matter is everywhere the same with regard to extension, it is also homogeneous with regard to action. All matter possesses the same amount of action at any place and time: "all the particular or local Motions of Matter are but the several Determinations of its general Action, directing it this or that way, by these or those Causes, in this or that manner, without giving it any Augmentation or Diminution. Indeed, in all Treatises of the ordinary Laws of Motion, you meet with the several degrees of Motion that any Body loses or acquires; but those concern the Quantity of the Action of particular Bodys on one another, and not the Action of Matter in general".²⁷

METAPHYSICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

It is clear that Toland's 'refutation of Spinoza' is hardly a real refutation. "Toland had not so much repudiated Spinoza as reproved him. He objected to the Ethics because he believed that its author's refusal to endow matter with motion undercut its cosmology."²⁸ In fact, the ideas of Toland and Spinoza are largely similar. Both are interested in motion not as a mathematical, but as a metaphysical concept. Further, they are one in their rejection of Descartes' theory of motion as a gift from on high. Their disagreement concerns only the theoretical foundations of this notion.

The problem of motion was, as stated, one of the basic problems in post-Cartesian philosophy. Small wonder that it also emerged in the discussion about Spinoza's work. But it was hardly common to criticise Spinoza, as Toland did, for not having endowed matter with motion; rather the reverse was the case. A refutation of Spinoza, as commonly understood, entailed the exposure of his objectionable, irreligious ideas. But Toland did not do this. Rather, as the Englishman William Wotton was quick to notice (*A letter to Eusebia*, 1704), he made the system of Spinoza still more irreligious by removing the last vestiges of God's presence in the world.²⁹ If this was a refutation,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176-177. In his *Pantheisticon* (1720) Toland was to express similar ideas. His ideas are dealt with in fuller detail by S.H. Daniel, *John Toland. His Methods, Manners, and Mind* (Kingston-Montreal, 1984), p. 186-210.

²⁸ Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, p. 193.

²⁹ Colie, "Spinoza and the Early English Deists", p. 44-45.

it was a refutation in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons!

Toland's may have been the first tract which purposely upheld the view that motion is essential to matter. But people had been aware of this view some twenty years earlier, and it was precisely to the Spinozists that this view was attributed. Adriaan Verwer's *'t Momaensicht der atheistery afgerukt* tries to refute 'Spinozism' exactly by proving that motion is *not* essential to matter. Verwer was a Mennonite merchant from Rotterdam with many intellectual interests and the author of several books. In 1680, he moved to Amsterdam, where, after his own testimony, he soon came into contact with followers of Spinoza. This led him to write a tract against Spinoza that was published in 1683, seven years after Spinoza's death, and forms a valuable, but somewhat neglected source on early Dutch Spinozism.³⁰

Verwer posits an essential difference between the Spinozist view and that of the orthodox. In sharp contrast to the latter, the Spinozists argued for a universe that was independent of a higher immaterial and external Power. In order to prove the orthodox view, it was sufficient to show that there existed *something* in the world that was independent of the material universe. Verwer then demonstrates the dependence of the world by the example of motion, that is, local motion of bodies, as discernable from the "wemeling" (swarming) of the corpuscles within those bodies. The first cause, or principle, of motion is not material, according to Verwer. After all, bodies can both move or be at rest, a position admitted by Spinoza himself: "omnia corpora moventur vel quiescunt" (*Ethics* II, first axiom after prop. 13). In other words, motion is not essential to matter. Motion therefore depends on something outside and above the material universe.³¹

Verwer's criticism of Spinoza runs largely parallel to Toland's. Both agree that Spinoza's theory of motion does not agree with his system. Both agree that local motion needs some external and immaterial agent. For Toland, this agent is his 'Action', which is in some way essential to matter; for Verwer, this agent is God. One should add that, while Toland feels satisfied having introduced a

³⁰ [Adriaan Verwer], *'t Momaensicht der atheistery afgerukt door een verhandeling van den aengeboren stand der menschen, vervattende niet alleen een betoogh van de rechtsinnige stelling; maer ook voornamentlijk een grondige wederlegging van de tegenstrijdige waen-gevoelens en in 't bysonder van de gehele Sede-konst, van Benedictus de Spinoza* (Amsterdam, 1683).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5-11.

word, Verwer at least makes an attempt to prove his point. After having shown that the cause of motion cannot be material, he goes on to argue that this cause must be one, omnipotent, eternal; in short, that it possesses all the traditional attributes of God.³²

Another well-known defender of similar views regarding the world's dependence on God was the French philosopher Malebranche. But the most important stronghold of the defenders of God's active participation in the world developed not within Cartesianism, but outside it, in British Newtonianism.³³ Indeed, it has been upheld that Toland wrote his *Letters* mainly as a reaction to Newtonianism.³⁴ In spite of some references to Newton in the work, this view seems to me somewhat overstated. After all, by 1704 a fully developed 'Newtonian ideology' had only begun to crystalise. As late as 1715, Newton's authority could also be invoked to uphold the reverse, that is, Toland's position. The French magistrate Antoine-Robert Pérole wrote in that year on the weakness of the traditional proofs of God from the order of nature: "Mais, me dirés-vous, au moins faut-il admettre une intelligence qui ait créé cette matière et l'ait mise en mouvement [...] Mais on peut aller encore plus loin, et dire avec M. Newton: nous ne connaissons point la nature des corps, tous ceux que nous voyons sont en mouvement, le mouvement ne leur serait-il pas essentiel? S'il était vrai, je crois que tous les philosophes qui regardent le bel ordre comme une preuve incontestable de l'existence de Dieu s'avoueraient vaincus".³⁵

The Newtonians seem more to have developed their ideas in reaction to Toland's, rather than vice versa. As Hélène Metzger stated, Toland's significance was principally to give his adversaries the opportunity for a brilliant refutation.³⁶ The array of Newtonians

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11-15.

³³ As is well known, in Newtonian versions of the 'dependency-thesis', gravitation often came to take the place of motion. It would go too far to give a full exposition of Newton's ideas with regard to motion here. Newton, unlike Descartes, believed in an 'absolute' space, which makes relativity of motion difficult to uphold.

³⁴ P. Casini, "Toland e l'attività della materia", *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 21 (1967) p. 24-53. See also Daniel, *John Toland*, p. 187. Lurbe, "Le spinozisme de John Toland", p. 43, calls the polemic with Spinoza even a pretext. On the other hand, Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, p. 194, is rather cautious on the subject.

³⁵ E.R. Briggs, "L'incrédulité et la pensée anglaise en France au début du dix-huitième siècle", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 41 (1934), p. 500-501. I need not explain that Newton never said such a thing.

³⁶ H. Metzger, *Attraction universelle et religion naturelle chez quelques commentateurs anglais de Newton* (Paris 1938) II, p. 110.

opposing the notion of 'motion essential to matter' is impressive. Besides many of the Boyle-lecturers, there are tracts by Ditton (1714), Baxter (1733, 1750), Morgan (1741), Clayton (1750), Porterfield (1759), and others.³⁷ They all deal with the thesis of motion being essential to matter as a notoriously atheistic, even Spinozistic theory.

None of these philosophers dealt with motion in a purely physical or mathematical way. Rather, their position was clearly inspired by metaphysical or religious considerations. The great question was whether there was a transcendent God, or not. Spinoza and other free-thinkers had shown the possible religious consequences of the new world-view. Descartes' world of 'matter in motion' brought a vision of materialism which many people abhorred. Scientific apologists therefore tried to find some place for God in the mechanical universe. If motion had to depend on an external agent, there was clearly such a place. Motion, therefore, had to be something which, as Descartes himself had stated, was endowed by God to the universe. The real loser in the polemics was thus the mathematical concept of motion. In order to be endowed, 'motion' had to be something active, while 'rest' had to be a pure privation.

Although the example of Verwer teaches us that awareness of these problems existed quite early, it seems that particularly Toland's provocative fifth letter drew the attention of the apologists to this field. As a result, it did not matter very much to most people what views Spinoza himself had held, or not held, on the subject. The idea of 'motion essential to matter' was generally identified with libertinism, atheism and, therefore, with 'Spinozism'. It was Spinozism that was refuted by claiming that motion was not essential to matter. Toland's criticism of Spinoza thus became a marked element of Spinozism itself.

CONCLUSION: TOLAND AND SPINOZA

Should we then take Toland's 'refutation of Spinoza' as disguised propaganda, strengthening the foundations in the process? Refutation was after all a not uncommon technique of drawing attention

³⁷ J.W. Yolton, *Thinking Matter. Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1984), p. 94-99.

to an author's ideas. In this case, however, this solution seems a bit too simple. On a purely theoretical level, Toland is just further developing Spinoza's system. But the confutation of Spinoza in the fourth letter does not only consist in the attack on his ideas described above. Hand in hand with this philosophical dispute goes an *ad hominem* argument, accusing Spinoza of "an immoderate Passion to become the Head of a Sect, to have Disciples and a new System of Philosophy honor'd with his name."³⁸

Spinoza's ambition is proved by his correspondance with Tschirnhaus as preserved in the *Opera Posthuma*. As is well known, Tschirnhaus asked for some elucidations of Spinoza's philosophy, precisely on the issue of motion, which Spinoza failed to provide—and could not provide, according to Toland, since Spinoza's system (as shown) was clearly defective here. However, it is not the exact contents of Tschirnhaus' critique that matter. Toland uses the episode not to shed light on Spinoza's philosophy, but on his behaviour as a man of honour and a philosopher. A person who is really looking for truth should not keep to ideas which have been shown wanting. At least, he should seriously undertake to mend the defects. By simply refusing to take notice of Tschirnhaus' critique, Spinoza has uncovered that he has other motives than love of truth.

In the end, Toland does not criticise Spinoza's ideas. He simply commits character assassination. Toland is not attacking what people called Spinozism: that clearly would entail proving the reverse position, that motion is *not* essential to matter. If anything, he is upholding Spinozism. He recognised that Spinoza was a philosopher close to his own position, an ally in the struggle against priestcraft and superstition. Toland did not criticise Spinoza because he was an adversary, but he certainly did attack Spinoza as a person.

He criticised him, first, because he honestly did not feel impelled to reject or accept any system unconditionally. Therefore, even if he and Spinoza were at one in many things, he felt free to criticise him on points of detail. This is a philosophically respectable point of view. But there seems to be a second reason for criticising Spinoza which is less honourable. To Toland, Spinoza was not just an ally, who should be supported, but also a competitor for philosophical renown, who should be kept down. If Toland accuses Spinoza of the desire to become head of a sect, he is very likely reflecting more his

³⁸ Toland, *Letters to Serena*, p. 136.

own preoccupations than Spinoza's. It is exactly because he recognised that Spinoza's ideas were so close to his own that he felt urged to stress the differences and point to the weak spots. Toland's criticism of Spinoza appears genuine in the sense that he is very eager to show that he is a better philosopher than Spinoza. Condescendingly, he admitted that Spinoza had some merits, but he refused to consider his pantheist philosophy seriously. There was only one real 'Spinozist' in the world and that was Toland himself.

4. FRANCE AND ITALY

LE 'SPINOZISME' D'ARNAULD

Emanuela Scribano

Ailleurs, j'ai essayé de montrer comment la doctrine cartésienne de la libre création des vérités éternelles a été transformée en une doctrine de la nécessité de l'action divine chez les cartésiens qui l'ont partagée.¹ Il s'agit d'un exemple surprenant d'hétérogénèse des fins, qui assume un intérêt tout à fait spécial, du fait que la doctrine spinozienne de la nécessité de l'action divine est reliée directement, soit par sa g n se, soit par son influence,   la doctrine cart sienne et   son  volution. Je voudrais v rifier cette th se dans un  pisode singulier: la tentative d'Arnauld de repousser le rejet leibnizien de la th orie cart sienne.

La transformation de la doctrine cart sienne 'niche'   l'int rieur de la compr hension et de la m ditation des cart siens sur cette m me doctrine. Dom Robert Desgabets est un exemple tr s indicatif soit de la r ception de la doctrine cart sienne soit de sa surprenante modification. Si Dieu a cr   les essences et les existences des choses, pense Desgabets, toutes les essences doivent  tre exemplifi  es dans la cr  ation, on ne peut pas parler d'essences qui n'existent pas, sinon en revenant   l'imposition d'une n cessit     Dieu, celle que Descartes entendait  viter en soumettant les essences   la toute-puissance divine. Desgabets est bien conscient que Descartes parle souvent d'essences, ou de natures qui n'existent pas, comme celles des math matiques, mais il s'agit, selon Desgabets, d'une incons quence de Descartes: "...tout ce qu'il dit de la nature, essence, forme immuable et  ternelle des triangles et autres choses qui n'existent pas, ne sert qu'  faire voir qu'il ne s'est pas d fait enti rement des pr jug  s communs."² Des essences qui ne sont pas exemplifi  es dans l'existence sont quelque chose qui  chappe   la toute-puissance

¹ M.E. Scribano, *Da Descartes a Spinoza* (Milano, 1988), p. 83 et suiv.

² Dom Robert Desgabets, *Suppl ment   la philosophie de Monsieur Descartes*, dans: *Oeuvres philosophiques in dites* (Amsterdam, 1983-1985), 7 vols., VII, p. 261.

et à la volonté divines et, par conséquent, qui limite le pouvoir de Dieu.

Un alinéa d'une des premières lettres dans lesquelles Descartes formulait sa doctrine doit avoir frappé énormément Desgabets comme tous les cartésiens qui, après lui, feront écho à la doctrine de la libre création du vrai: là où Descartes soutient que les vérités éternelles sont "tantum verae aut possibles quia Deus illas verae aut possibles cognoscit, non autem contra..."³ La possibilité, c'est-à-dire le principe de non contradiction, qui définit ce que nous entendons comme possible, a été librement établi par Dieu, soutient Descartes dans cette lettre. La possibilité dépend du décret divin, donc -interprète Desgabets- elle n'est pas intelligible en soi, par ses caractéristiques intrinsèques, à savoir par la non contradiction. Son intelligibilité, au contraire, dépend de sa cause, du décret divin, et, par conséquent, seulement ce que Dieu a décrété et qui existe est possible. La possibilité ne précède pas l'existence, mais elle en dépend.⁴ Ou encore: le décret divin a comme objet les existences, donc, si, avec Descartes, on veut soumettre les essences aussi au décret divin, on devra soutenir que toutes les essences sont exemplifiées, à savoir que seul ce qui existe est possible. Desgabets est convaincu que la doctrine cartésienne empêche d'imaginer des créatures, c'est-à-dire des essences, purement possibles:

...il ne faut pas considérer Dieu [...] comme percevant déjà les créatures en qualité de choses possibles [...] Mais il est infiniment plus sûr de dire que tout ce qu'il y a de concevable [...] dans toutes les [...] créatures suppose le décret libre de Dieu [...] Ces créatures qu'on appelle purement possibles [...] auraient [...] quelque chose par elles-mêmes, et cependant on veut que Dieu leur donne tout.

Comme serait-il plus naturel et plus sûr de dire qu'on ne peut jamais penser à une créature, ni la nommer, sans enfermer une supposition que Dieu l'a créée!⁵

Desgabets est un cas exemplaire d'un phénomène répandu en France comme en Hollande. La doctrine qui voulait rendre Dieu

³ Descartes à Mersenne, 6 mai 1630, dans: Descartes, *Oeuvres*, éd. Ch. Adam & P. Tannery (Paris, 1964-1974), 11 vols., I, p. 149.

⁴ Cf. Desgabets, *Supplément*, dans: *Oeuvres* VI, p. 235: "...tout ce qui existe actuellement n'ayant rien dans sa définition qui contienne incompatibilité dans les termes, on a pu dire en ce sens que la matière et toutes les choses du monde sont possibles, non pas en excluant l'existence, mais au contraire en ce qu'elles l'enferment, ce qui est conforme à cette maxime: *ab actu ad posse valet consequentia*."

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

libre jusqu'au point de ne pas être assujetti aux lois du vrai, se transforme en la thèse selon laquelle la création épuise la puissance divine, et selon laquelle seul ce qui existe est possible.

Bien sûr cette tournure de la doctrine cartésienne se nourrit de malentendus: suivant la doctrine cartésienne le principe de non contradiction a été librement créé par Dieu, et ce que nous concevons comme possible nous le concevons tel parce qu'il ne viole pas ce principe, donc la thèse cartésienne est tout à fait compatible avec la définition du possible par ses caractéristiques intrinsèques, c'est-à-dire par le principe de non contradiction, et indépendamment de l'existence, pourvu qu'on n'oublie pas que ce principe a été établi par Dieu; ou encore: suivant Descartes, Dieu crée les essences aussi bien que les existences, mais ceci n'implique pas que toutes les essences soient exemplifiées dans la création, pourvu qu'on n'oublie pas que les essences auxquelles ne correspond pas une existence dépendent elles aussi du décret divin. Mais évidemment Desgabets raisonne en cartésien tout en gardant quelques éléments de la doctrine que Descartes voulait bouleverser. Il continue à penser, avec toute la pensée pré-cartésienne, que la volonté et les décrets divins visent des existences, mais, avec Descartes, et contre la tradition théologique que Descartes voulait rejeter, il refuse d'admettre que ces existences soient choisies parmi des essences qui ne dépendent pas du décret divin. Par conséquent, il traduit la thèse cartésienne suivant laquelle Dieu crée soit les essences soit les existences par la thèse suivant laquelle toutes les essences sont exemplifiées dans la création. Il n'y a pas une essence indépendante de l'existence ni avant ni après la création, voilà ce que la thèse de la création des essences et des existences signifie chez Desgabets.

Encore plus profondément, Desgabets n'arrive pas à comprendre que le principe de non contradiction soit librement créé par Dieu, et traduit la doctrine cartésienne selon laquelle le possible—à savoir le principe de non contradiction—dépend de Dieu par la thèse d'origine aristotélicienne, selon laquelle seul ce qui existe dans un moment du temps est possible,⁶ une thèse qui lui paraît conforme à la doctrine cartésienne en tant qu'elle relie le possible à une cause (le cas échéant, Dieu) qui le porte à l'existence. Ainsi, pour Desgabets, le

⁶ Cf. J. Hintikka, *Time and Necessity. Studies in Aristotle's Theory of Modality* (Oxford, 1973).

possible dépend de Dieu dans le sens que seul ce qui est créé est possible.

Desgabets est convaincu d'avoir sauvé, éventuellement contre la lettre de Descartes, l'esprit de la théorie cartésienne, son exaltation de la souveraineté et de la toute-puissance de Dieu, dont chaque chose dépend. Il faut dire que les essences ne sont rien avant leur existence "de peur de tomber dans le grand inconvénient qu'il y aurait à dire que les créatures possèdent quelques degrés d'être indépendamment de Dieu."⁷

Spinoza profitera de la possibilité de renverser la doctrine de la liberté divine, tout en évitant les équivoques qui marquent la réception de la doctrine chez Desgabets. Il s'agit d'une rencontre précoce. Déjà les *Cogitata Metaphysica* présentent la conséquence la plus rigoureuse de la doctrine cartésienne, à savoir l'équivalence entre les vérités de fait et les vérités de raison, entre la nécessité causale et la nécessité logique: "... l'essence de la chose considérée en elle-même n'est rien d'autre que le décret de Dieu ou sa volonté déterminée. Mais nous disons aussi que la nécessité d'exister réellement ne se distingue pas de la nécessité de l'essence [...] et *par suite*, si nous connaissions l'ordre des causes tel qu'il a été établi par Dieu, nous trouverions que le triangle doit exister réellement à tel instant avec la même nécessité que nous trouvons maintenant, quand nous avons égard à sa nature, que ses trois angles doivent être égaux à deux droits."⁸

Mais l'*Ethique* va encore plus loin. La doctrine cartésienne, si elle est bien entendue, et rigoureusement comprise, implique aussi la nécessité de la création, à savoir l'impossibilité pour Dieu de créer autrement de ce qu'il crée. Les éléments qui composent la thèse spinozienne sont essentiellement deux: l'actualité de la puissance divine, et l'indistinction de l'essence divine de la puissance et de la volonté.

Aux théologiens qui soutiennent que Dieu aurait pu créer autrement parce que sa volonté est libre, Spinoza concède deux prémisses: la première, que "la volonté appartient à l'essence de Dieu", et la seconde qu'"il dépend du seul décret et de la seule

⁷ Desgabets, *Supplément*, dans: *Oeuvres* VI, p. 248.

⁸ Spinoza, *Cogitata Metaphysica*, dans: *Opera*, éd. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1972), 4 vols., I, p. 241-243, traduction française par Ch. Appuhn. Voir aussi *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, dans: *Opera*, éd. Gebhardt, III, p. 63.

volonté de Dieu que chaque chose soit ce qu'elle est". Dans la dernière prémisse, on reconnaît la thèse de la création des essences d'origine cartésienne. Or, même à l'intérieur des ces deux prémisses, il est impossible de tirer les conséquences que Descartes avait prétendu en déduire, à savoir la liberté de Dieu par rapport à la création, parce que

...tous les Philosophes, à ma connaissance, accordent qu'il n'existe pas en Dieu, d'entendement en puissance mais seulement un entendement en acte; puis donc que son entendement et sa volonté ne se distinguent pas de son essence, ainsi que tous aussi l'accordent, il suit de là encore que, si Dieu avait eu un autre entendement en acte et une autre volonté, son essence aussi eût été nécessairement autre [...] ce qui est absurde.⁹

Les thèses qui, suivant Spinoza, auraient dû convaincre Descartes, avec tous les philosophes, que Dieu n'aurait pu créer autrement, sont donc l'indistinction des attributs divins de l'essence de Dieu, et l'actualité divine. Spinoza repère à l'intérieur de la théologie, et notamment de la théologie cartésienne, les thèses qui devraient rendre impensable une possibilité incréée et donc une liberté de choix en Dieu. Descartes avait revendiqué l'indistinction en Dieu de puissance, de volonté et d'entendement, comme présupposé de sa doctrine: "... c'est en Dieu une mesme chose de vouloir, d'entendre, et de creer, sans que l'un precede l'autre, *ne quidem ratione*" proclamait Descartes à Mersenne.¹⁰ En effet, l'indistinction de volonté et d'entendement en Dieu était une prémisse indispensable de la théorie. Etant donné que Descartes niait l'existence d'un contenu intelligible de vérité précédant le décret divin, il devait par conséquent nier que l'entendement divin précédât et déterminât la volonté divine. Spinoza pousse la thèse de la simplicité divine jusqu'à comprendre l'indistinction des attributs de l'essence divine, pour obtenir la conséquence que Dieu ne peut pas produire autrement de ce qu'il produit. Cette même conséquence est tirée par Desgabets, et par des nombreux cartésiens, de la doctrine de la libre création des vérités éternelles: "[Dieu ne] peut faire autre chose, ni autrement, ni le contraire de ce qu'il a créé, ou des vérités qu'il a établies. Ces mots *autrement, contraire, autre chose*, renferment un rapport à ces prétendues choses

⁹ *Ethica* I, prop. 33, schol. 2, traduction française par Ch. Appuhn.

¹⁰ Descartes à Mersenne, 27 mars 1630, éd. Adam & Tannery I, p. 153.

contraires, lesquelles néanmoins ne sont pas des choses et ne sont pas même concevables, ni nominables...”¹¹

Tandis que la simplicité divine revendiquée par Spinoza est un élément qui, contre Descartes, radicalise l’indistinction que Descartes lui-même avait posée entre “creari, intelligere et velle”, l’actualité divine soulignée par Spinoza est apparemment une nouveauté—sinon un contresens—par rapport à la théorie cartésienne. Et pourtant elle démontre une singulière capacité de s’intégrer à la déformation de la théorie de la libre création des vérités éternelles proposée par les cartésiens. On a vu que les cartésiens tournent la défense cartésienne d’admettre des possibilités qui s’imposent à Dieu et parmi lesquelles Dieu choisit en la thèse suivant laquelle la création divine ne laisse pas des possibles en puissance; seulement ce qui est créé est possible, donc il n’y a rien qui soit en puissance en Dieu, ni dans son entendement, ni dans sa volonté, ni dans sa puissance. Ou encore: si la volonté est la même chose que la puissance, ce que Dieu veut en épuise la puissance, donc il n’y a rien en Dieu qui ne soit actuel. L’actualité divine soulignée par Spinoza contre les philosophes qui soutiennent la contingence de l’action divine, et notamment contre Descartes, se marie donc très bien avec la tournure de la doctrine cartésienne et en achève la surprenante confluence dans la thèse spinoziste suivant laquelle Dieu ne pourrait créer autrement, et que tout ce qui est possible arrive.

On peut vérifier cette déformation dans les reprises de la théorie cartésienne chez les auteurs qui connaissent Spinoza. Un bon exemple est celui de Pierre Silvain Régis qui, après avoir essayé de reproduire la doctrine cartésienne, poursuit: “Comme je ne reconnois aucune puissance en Dieu qu’à l’égard des choses qu’il produit hors de luy, et que je ne conçois pas que Dieu puisse rien produire hors de luy que par sa volonté, je ne distingue pas aussi la volonté de Dieu d’avec sa puissance. [...] Dieu estant un estre simple [...] il ne peut avoir aucune puissance qui soit, ni qui puisse estre separée de l’acte. [...] C’est pourquoy, quand je dirai [...] ‘Que Dieu peut faire des choses qu’il ne veut pas faire’ [...] je ne parleray pas à la rigueur”.¹² Mais le phénomène de la modification spinoziste de la doctrine cartésienne n’est pas seulement français. En Hollande,

¹¹ Desgabets, *Supplément*, dans: *Oeuvres* VI, p. 234.

¹² P.S. Régis, *Cours entier de Philosophie ou Systeme general selon les principes de M. Descartes* (Amsterdam, 1691), I, p. 93-95.

d'abord Burman, et après Christoph Wittich, dans son commentaire spinoziste à sa réfutation de Spinoza, reprennent et relancent la déformation de la théorie dans les mêmes termes dans lesquels elle avait été présentée en France :

à la nature de Dieu répugne l'indifférence soit de l'entendement soit de la volonté. Etant donné qu'en Dieu être, entendre et vouloir ne diffèrent pas entre eux, si Dieu n'est pas indifférent à l'être si bien qu'en lui on ne peut pas concevoir un être différent, pour la même raison on ne peut pas concevoir en lui un entendre et un vouloir différent.

Il faut encore une fois souligner que ce renversement est opéré au nom de l'exigence qui avait poussé Descartes à formuler sa doctrine, à savoir la nécessité de ne pas diminuer la toute-puissance de Dieu, en posant quelque chose—le possible—indépendant de lui : "...les choses ne sont pas dites possibles avant de considérer la puissance de Dieu, mais toute fondation de leur possibilité se trouve dans la puissance, entendement et volonté de Dieu."¹³

En France comme en Hollande, les éléments qui caractérisent la version spinoziste de la théorie cartésienne sont donc la définition du possible par rapport à la puissance divine (seulement ce que Dieu crée est possible), et l'actualité de l'action divine qui en suit.

Ce qui nous intéresse ici, ce n'est pas de vérifier si les cartésiens sont de bons interprètes de Descartes, parce qu'ils ne le sont sûrement pas, au moment où ils trahissent si évidemment ses intentions. Il nous intéresse plutôt d'avoir vérifié que dans le dernier quart du siècle, on n'arrive pas à penser la doctrine cartésienne de la liberté divine sinon dans sa version spinoziste.

La *Critique de la critique* de Desgabets date de 1675. Mais la déformation qui nous intéresse avait été déjà présentée par Burman, dans sa *Synopsis theologiae* de 1671, émendée dans l'édition de 1678. La réfutation de Desgabets par Louis de La Ville paraît en 1680, et, par l'intermédiaire de Desgabets, elle repousse Descartes lui-même, avec l'accusation de limiter la liberté de Dieu, parce que, suivant sa doctrine, Dieu peut seulement ce qu'il veut.¹⁴

¹³ C. Wittich, *Commentarius de Deo et ejus attributis* (Amsterdam, 1690), p. 363-365.

¹⁴ L. Le Valois (pseud. L. de La Ville), *Sentimens de M. Des Cartes touchant l'essence et les propriétés du corps [...] Avec une dissertation sur la prétendue possibilité des choses impossibles* (Paris, 1680).

C'est en janvier 1680 que Leibniz aborde la question. La doctrine que Leibniz attribue à Descartes suivant laquelle la matière "formas omnes quarum est capax successive assum(i)t"¹⁵ est jugée spinoziste par Leibniz, et elle est présentée comme une conséquence de la théorie de la libre création du vrai et du bien. En conséquence de cette théorie, le Dieu de Descartes, comme celui de Spinoza, "produit tout indifféremment bon ou mauvais, étant indifférent à l'égard des choses et par conséquent nulle raison l'inclinant plutôt à l'un qu'à l'autre. Ainsi ou il ne fera rien ou il fera tout."¹⁶ L'indifférence cartésienne est ennemie du choix et de la liberté divine, selon Leibniz, parce qu'elle supprime les raisons du choix. Il faut donc travailler pour rétablir la liberté de Dieu et, paradoxalement, cette entreprise doit se mesurer avec la théorie qui avait le plus exalté la liberté divine, la théorie cartésienne de la libre création du vrai.

Le *Discours de métaphysique* (1686) constitue la tentative la plus systématique pour accomplir le projet de rétablir la liberté divine contre les conséquences spinozistes de la théorie cartésienne. Pour rendre à Dieu les raisons du choix, Leibniz pense qu'il soit nécessaire, contre Descartes, de reconstituer le cadre des possibilités, indépendantes du décret divin, sur lequel puisse s'exercer le choix.

Le *Discours de métaphysique* s'ouvre avec un refus explicite de la théorie cartésienne:

(§2) je suis fort éloigné du sentiment de ceux qui soutiennent qu'il n'y a point de règles de bonté et de perfection dans la nature des choses, ou dans les idées que Dieu en a; et que les ouvrages de Dieu ne sont bons que par cette raison formelle que Dieu les a faits. [...] J'avoue que [ce] sentiment [...] me paroist extrêmement dangereux et fort approchant de celui des derniers novateurs, dont l'opinion est, que la beauté de l'univers et la bonté que nous attribuons aux ouvrages de Dieu, ne sont que des chimères des hommes qui conçoivent Dieu à leur manière. [...] C'est pourquoy je trouve encor cette expression de quelques autres philosophes tout à fait estrange, qui disent que les vérités éternelles de la metaphysique et de la Geometrie, et par consequent aussi les règles de la bonté, de la justice et de la perfection, ne sont que les effets de la volonté de Dieu, au lieu qu'il me semble que ce ne sont que des suites de son entendement, qui, assurément, ne depend point de sa volonté, non plus que son essence.

¹⁵ Leibniz se rapporte aux *Principia* II, p. 47.

¹⁶ Leibniz an Philippi, januar 1680 dans: *Die philosophischen Schriften*, éd. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875-1890; Hildesheim, 1978), IV, p. 285 et aussi an Molanus (?), *ibid.*, p. 299.

Cet endroit contient tous les éléments qui nous intéressent:

1. l'intention de bâtir un système opposé à celui de la libre création du vrai et du bien (la référence aux ouvrages de Dieu qui ne sont bons que par cette raison que Dieu les a faits, est une citation cachée prise de la réponse aux sixièmes objections de Descartes, et de son interprétation tendancieuse de la Genèse, sur laquelle Leibniz avait déjà fait ses remarques.)¹⁷

2. le rapprochement de cette théorie à Spinoza (Leibniz nomme ici "les derniers novateurs" à la place des "Spinozistes" qui paraissaient dans la rédaction précédente)¹⁸

3. la thèse théologique qui peut fonder une théorie opposée à celle que Leibniz rapporte au couple Descartes-Spinoza, à savoir la distinction de l'entendement et de la volonté en Dieu.

Aussitôt après, Leibniz introduit l'autre élément qui renverse la théorie cartésienne: les possibles indépendants de la volonté de Dieu et objets de l'entendement de Dieu, sur lesquels s'exerce le choix divin. L'entendement de Dieu contient les notions des substances individuelles, notions qui enferment une fois pour toutes tout ce qui peut leur arriver, et la volonté de Dieu choisit parmi ses substances.

Comme, à l'époque, Descartes avait protesté contre Suarez qui soutenait que les vérités éternelles sont vraies indépendamment du décret de Dieu, cette fois-ci c'est Arnauld qui se révolte contre une doctrine qui reproduit la thèse de Suarez, et qui établit que la possibilité s'impose à la volonté divine. Arnauld, comme Descartes, refuse la théorie leibnizienne suivant laquelle il y aurait des possibles indépendants de la volonté de Dieu, justement pour défendre la liberté et la souveraineté de Dieu que la notion de substance individuelle de Leibniz rend douteuse. Arnauld veut savoir si la liaison entre un individu d'une part, Adam, par exemple, et tout ce qui lui arrivera de l'autre, est indépendante des décrets libres de Dieu, ou si elle en dépend. Arnauld connaît déjà la réponse; il a bien compris que Leibniz penche pour l'indépendance: "je crois que vous supposez que [...] les choses possibles sont possibles avant tous les décrets libres de Dieu". Or, c'est justement cette indépendance qu'Arnauld trouve inconcevable. Arnauld avait déjà souligné, en répondant au Landgrave, que cette doctrine nie la liberté de Dieu,

¹⁷ Cf. Descartes, *Sextae Responsiones*, éd. Adam & Tannery VII, p. 435-36. Cf. Leibniz an Philippi, Januar 1680, éd. Gerhardt IV, p. 284-85.

¹⁸ Cf. Leibniz, *Discours de métaphysique*, éd. H. Lestienne (Paris, 1929), p. 27.

parce que, si Leibniz a raison, “Dieu a esté libre de créer ou de ne pas créer Adam; mais supposant qu’il l’ait voulu créer, tout ce qui est depuis arrivé au genre humain, et qui luy arrivera à jamais, a dû et doit arriver par une nécessité plus que fatale [...] Il n’y a donc pas [...] de liberté en Dieu, à l’égard de tout cela, supposé qu’il ait voulu créer Adam...”¹⁹ C’est donc la liberté de Dieu qui est limitée chez Leibniz.

Quand il s’adressera directement à Leibniz, Arnauld repoussera sa doctrine, en refusant d’admettre une possibilité indépendante du décret divin:

j’avoue de bonne foi que je n’ai aucune idée de ces substances purement possibles, c’est à dire que Dieu ne créera jamais. Et je suis fort porté à croire, que ce sont des chimères que nous nous formons, et que tout ce que nous appellons substances possibles, purement possibles, ne peut estre autre chose que la toute puissance de Dieu, qui estant un pur acte, ne souffre point qu’il y ait en luy aucune possibilité... Je suis fort trompé s’il y a personne qui ose dire qu’il a l’idée d’une substance possible purement possible. Car pour moy, je suis convaincu, que quoyqu’on parle tant de ces substances purement possibles, on n’en conçoit néanmoins jamais aucune que sous l’idée de quelqu’une de celles que Dieu a créées.²⁰

Arnauld n’a pas de difficulté à reconnaître le choix leibnizien pour l’indépendance du possible du décret divin. Par contre Arnauld, avec Descartes, refuse d’admettre que la possibilité soit créée et indépendante de Dieu. Mais l’adhésion à la thèse cartésienne porte Arnauld à la reproduire avec les équivoques et la tournure ‘spinoziste’ qu’on a vu chez Desgabets. Que le possible dépende de Dieu signifie, pour Arnauld, qu’on ne peut pas définir le possible indépendamment du décret divin, et que, par conséquent, tout ce qu’on appelle possible existe réellement, à savoir que la possibilité dépend de l’existence. Ce qui définit le possible, suivant Arnauld, ce n’est pas la non contradiction d’une proposition, c’est-à-dire, ce n’est pas en soi et par sa propre nature qu’une chose est possible, mais une chose est possible par rapport à sa cause, c’est-à-dire à la toute puissance divine: “tout ce que nous appellons substances possibles, purement possibles, ne peut estre autre chose que la toute-puissance de Dieu”. Mais si le possible dépend de la toute-puissance divine, il n’y

¹⁹ Arnauld au Landgrave Ernest de Hesse-Rheinfels, 13 may 1686, éd. Gerhardt II, p. 15.

²⁰ Arnauld à Leibniz, 13 mai 1686, dans: *ibid.*, p. 29 et 31-32.

a aucune possibilité créée, parce que la puissance divine est "un pur acte", qui "ne souffre point qu'il y ait en luy aucune possibilité". Possible est ce qui dépend du décret divin, et qui, par conséquent, existe dans un moment du temps.

On reconnaît ici la même modification de la doctrine cartésienne qu'on a trouvée chez Desgabets et qu'on trouvera chez Wittich et Régis. Arnauld, comme Desgabets, Wittich et Régis traduit la thèse selon laquelle Dieu établit librement le critère par rapport auquel une proposition est comprise comme possible, à savoir le principe de non contradiction, par la thèse selon laquelle seulement ce que Dieu produit est possible. C'est la seule façon par laquelle les cartésiens arrivent à comprendre la doctrine cartésienne selon laquelle le possible ne s'impose pas à Dieu, mais dépend de son entendement et de sa volonté. La marque la plus évidente de la version 'spinoziste' de la doctrine cartésienne qu'Arnauld croit défendre contre Leibniz est le refus de définir la possibilité par la non contradiction, c'est-à-dire par une caractéristique intrinsèque, et le choix de définir le possible par rapport à sa cause, la toute-puissance divine unie à son décret.

Comparons Arnauld avec Wittich: "tout ce que nous appelons substances possibles, purement possibles, ne peut estre autre chose que la toute-puissance de Dieu" dit Arnauld, et Wittich confirmera: "...les choses ne sont pas dites possibles avant de considérer la puissance de Dieu, mais toute fondation de leur possibilité est placée dans la puissance, entendement et volonté de Dieu [...] A cela nous conduit aussi la définition commune du possible: 'Possible est ce qui peut être produit par une cause déterminée', il présuppose donc dans son concept le concept de la cause, et par conséquent il lui est postérieur."²¹

Chez Arnauld on retrouve aussi la conséquence de cette version de la thèse cartésienne qu'on avait rencontrée chez Desgabets et Régis: l'accent sur l'actualité divine. Etant donné que seulement ce que Dieu crée est possible, on peut revendiquer à la lettre le *topos* de la théologie selon lequel il n'y a rien en Dieu qui soit en puissance, ce même *topos* sur lequel Spinoza s'était appuyé pour contraindre les philosophes à reconnaître l'impossibilité de poser une contingence dans l'action divine.

Arnauld, comme les autres cartésiens, est convaincu de combattre

²¹ Wittich, *Commentarius de Deo*, p. 337.

à côté de Descartes pour la liberté et la souveraineté de Dieu, contre les théologiens qui “ont soumis Dieu au destin”, et qui s’imaginent que le choix divin se fasse dans un cadre de possibilités indépendantes du décret divin.

On comprend ainsi la situation paradoxale qui se crée dans les lettres entre Arnauld et Leibniz. Arnauld croit, et avec raison, se trouver face à un Suarez renouvelé et devoir reprendre la lutte que Descartes avait combattu à l’époque contre Suarez en faveur de la liberté et de la toute-puissance divines, tandis que Leibniz le prévient: la route qu’il a prise mène tout droit à la négation de la contingence, et du choix divin, c’est-à-dire au spinozisme. Arnauld et Leibniz défendent l’un contre l’autre la liberté divine qu’ils voient menacée par la théorie de l’adversaire, mais les armes d’Arnauld ne sont plus celles que Descartes avait forgées contre Suarez.

On retrouve ici la même situation qui, en 1680, avait opposé La Ville à Desgabets. Desgabets, comme maintenant Arnauld, avait refusé les “purs possibles” pour défendre, avec Descartes, la liberté et la souveraineté divines; La Ville, comme maintenant Leibniz, avait revendiqué la nécessité de poser des purs possibles parmi lesquels Dieu choisit, pour sauver le choix divin, autrement “tout se qui se fait dans le monde, se fera par une nécessité absolue”.²² La doctrine cartésienne est devenue un ennemi de la liberté de Dieu - La Ville la compare à celle de Wyclef, un nom qui reviendra chez Leibniz à côté de celui de Spinoza.²³ Par conséquent, La Ville propose de défendre la liberté de Dieu, en revenant à la thèse théologique que Descartes avait combattue au nom de la souveraineté divine, et déclare que “les choses possibles sont possibles, indépendamment des décrets de la volonté de Dieu.”²⁴ La thèse de Suarez est devenue maintenant la meilleure défense de la liberté de Dieu, paradoxalement menacée par les disciples infidèles de Descartes.

Contre Arnauld, Leibniz confirme la thèse de l’indépendance du possible des décrets divins, et il essaie de ‘débusquer’ Arnauld avec une allusion à l’origine de sa difficulté: peut-être Arnauld se range-t-il ici du côté des cartésiens, qui, comme lui, soutiennent que la possibilité ne s’impose pas à Dieu, mais en dépend: “... les notions speci-

²² De La Ville, *Sentimens*, p. 246.

²³ *Ibid.*, cf. Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée* § 172-173.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

fiques les plus abstraites ne contiennent que des vérités nécessaires ou éternelles, qui ne dependent point des decrets divins (quoy qu'en disent les Cartesiens, dont il semble que vous même ne vous estes pas soucié en ce point)."²⁵ Leibniz rapporte la thèse d'Arnauld à ses origines cartésiennes et conforme sa critique à la tournure spinoziste que la doctrine avait assumée chez les cartésiens: "s'il n'y avait rien de possible que ce que Dieu a créé effectivement, ce que Dieu crée serait nécessaire, et Dieu voulant créer quelque chose, ne pourroit créer que cela seul, sans avoir la liberté du choix."²⁶ La difficulté d'origine cartésienne qu'Arnauld a posée à Leibniz implique, comme conséquence, ni plus ni moins, que la négation du choix divin. C'est une conséquence inattendue pour une doctrine qui ne voulait pas poser de limites au choix divin, mais Leibniz a raison par rapport aux termes dans lesquels la doctrine cartésienne a été présentée par les cartésiens et Arnauld, parmi eux. En essayant de repousser Leibniz par la déformation courante de la doctrine cartésienne, Arnauld offre donc à Leibniz le meilleur—sinon le plus inespéré—appui à ce qu'il a déclaré en ouvrant son *Discours de métaphysique*: la doctrine de la libre création des vérités éternelles est une thèse spinoziste en tant qu'elle rend impossible le choix divin. Leibniz croyait que le spinozisme de la doctrine cartésienne arrachait à Dieu les *raisons* du choix; Arnauld lui démontre que le spinozisme de la doctrine cartésienne est encore plus outré, parcequ'il supprime la *possibilité* du choix.

"...his wish to preserve the freedom of God leads [Arnauld] to deny the existence of possible individuals, so that he inadvertently aligns himself with Spinoza..." commentait Catherine Wilson à propos de la lettre d'Arnauld qui nous intéresse.²⁷ Mais Catherine Wilson, tout en remarquant la saveur paradoxalement spinoziste de la défense de la liberté de Dieu élaborée par Arnauld, ne se demandait pas pourquoi Arnauld pouvait-il croire de défendre la liberté de Dieu tout en utilisant une thèse spinoziste. La raison en est qu'Arnauld est convaincu d'opposer à Leibniz la doctrine qui avait poussé à la limite extrême la liberté de Dieu. Ce qui explique aussi l'embarras d'Arnauld et l'incapacité d'organiser une réponse face aux reproches tout à fait inattendus de Leibniz, selon lesquels ses mots détruiraient la contingence et la liberté de Dieu:

²⁵ Leibniz à Arnauld, 4/14 juillet 1686, éd. Gerhardt II, p. 49.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁷ C. Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1989), p. 93.

Il ne me reste de difficulté que sur la possibilité des choses, et sur cette manière de concevoir Dieu comme ayant choisy l'Univers qu'il a créé entre une infinité d'autres univers possibles qu'il a vus en mesme temps et qu'il n'a pas voulu créer. Mais comme [...] il faudroit que je revasse trop pour bien faire entendre ce que je pense sur cela, ou plustost ce que je trouve à redire dans les pensées des autres, parcequ'elles ne me paroissent pas dignes de Dieu, vous trouverez bon, Monsieur, que je ne vous en dise rien.²⁸

Les pensées des autres—de Leibniz en ce cas-là—restent pour Arnauld indignes de Dieu, comme indignes de Dieu avaient semblé les pensées de Suarez à Descartes. Mais la situation a bien changé: la défense de la liberté de Dieu est devenue son contraire, la destruction de la contingence, un spinozisme, et Arnauld se voit incapable d'en sortir.

Il faudrait repenser à nouveau une théorie qu'Arnauld a essayé de reproduire, peut-être en la reprenant directement de Desgabets,²⁹ convaincu qu'elle était la meilleure pour défendre la souveraineté de Dieu et dont Leibniz décèle maintenant des conséquences gênantes: elle arrache à Dieu la liberté de choix, juste comme Spinoza pensait que les philosophes et les théologiens soucieux de la dignité de Dieu et de la cohérence de leurs idées auraient été contraints de faire.

On comprend aussi la bonne conscience de Leibniz, qui, tout en proposant un déterminisme par rapport à la volonté de Dieu, se présente comme un défenseur de la liberté divine. En effet, l'alliance entre les cartésiens et Spinoza par rapport à la nécessité de l'action divine a obtenu comme résultat que le choix, bien que nécessaire, que Leibniz assure quand même à son Dieu peut se présenter, dans les années '80, comme la seule défense possible de la liberté de Dieu.

²⁸ Arnauld à Leibniz, 28 sept. 1686, éd. Gerhardt II, p. 64.

²⁹ Arnauld, comme Desgabets, est convaincu qu'il est impossible d'imaginer des substances qui n'existent pas, mais qu'il est par contre légitime de parler des modifications de ces substances qui seraient possibles, sans pourtant exister. Cf. Desgabets, *Supplément*, dans: *Oeuvres* VI, p. 237 et suiv. et Arnauld à Leibniz, 13 mai 1686, éd. Gerhardt II, p. 32.

SPINOZA IN CLANDESTINE MANUSCRIPTS: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF RECENT RESEARCH

Antony McKenna

Since Paul Vernière's thesis (1954)*, our acquaintance with clandestine literature has gained in width and depth. Vernière worked on the texts discovered by Gustave Lanson (1912) and Ira O. Wade (1938): the American scholar produced 102 titles of clandestine manuscripts for the period 1700-1750. The new inventories proposed by Miguel Benítez (1982, 1988, 1995) have been extended with the help of readers of the *Lettre clandestine* (1992-) and the latest research proposes a list of 257 titles and innumerable hitherto unknown copies. These figures give an indication of the health and vigour of research into clandestine literature. Discovery of new texts has been accompanied by analysis of the substance of clandestine philosophy, and the picture of Spinoza's reception is gradually being painted in more detail. In this paper, I will not attempt to draw the conclusions, since much of this research is embryonic; I will try to give a complete scan of critical studies concerning Spinoza in clandestine manuscript literature over the last few years. I will follow roughly the order of P. Vernière's chronological study of the influence of Spinoza.

Jean-Baptiste Stoupe played a prominent role in making the general public acquainted with the figure of Spinoza. P. Vernière's documentation came mainly from Gustave Cohen (1925-1926), but recent work throws more light on this enigmatic figure. M. Benítez (ed. 1994) has shown that Stoupe's controversial book is the source of a clandestine manuscript entitled *A Madame xxx sur les différentes religions de Hollande*, contained in a collection in Douai. Using the archives in Zürich, Benítez gives new biographical information on the mysterious figure of this Swiss Calvinist, who translated sermons of William Baxter and became a 'close friend' of Spinoza. In this context, Stoupe might appear to evolve in the half-light of

* A chronological bibliography will be found in appendix to this article.

freethought, but a new document discovered by Elisabeth Labrousse (1995) ensures his adherence to the Reformed faith: former pastor of the pro-Parlementarian Walloon Church in Threadneedle Street, London, Stouppe is well known in Charenton, and, in April 1679, having spent some time, with his brother, in military employment as colonel in the Swiss regiment of Louis XIV, requests the provincial synod at Charenton for permission to join the French Reformed community. This permission is granted and Stouppe remains faithful to the Reformed faith. In 1686, he travels in Italy with the Low Church bishop Gilbert Burnet, and dies on the 23rd of August 1692 from wounds received at the battle of Steenkerken.

To P. Vernière's list of those who contributed to the diffusion of Spinozist ideas in the Netherlands, we can now add Balthasar Bekker, who has been studied by Wiep van Bunge (1993) and, in the present volume, by Andrew Fix. These same authors (1990, 1991) have published excellent studies of Johannes Bredenburg and the Dutch Collegiants in relation to the development of rationalism. J. de Vet (1989) has made an important contribution to knowledge of the Spinoza debate in Dutch periodicals, and, in the present volume, a number of papers throw new light on the influence of Spinoza in the Netherlands and on the suppression of his works.

Since P. Vernière's work, Bayle's article and other texts concerning Spinoza have been studied in more detail: Françoise Charles-Daubert and Pierre-François Moreau (ed. 1983) have provided a new edition of the relevant texts; Geneviève Brykman (1990) studies Bayle's refutation of Spinoza's definition of substance and relates the portrait of Spinoza to that of Uriel da Costa (on whom see also Jean-Pierre Osier, 1983); Gianluca Mori (1988) goes over these same texts in an attempt to pin down Bayle's own position. Among Protestant theologians engaged in conflict with Spinozist ideas, Jean Leclerc has been closely studied by Cristina Pitassi (1987), who provides also (1988) a good idea of the status of Spinozism in Geneva towards the end of the 17th century.

P. Vernière gives little room to Fontenelle, who was strongly influenced by Bekker and Van Dale and in close contact with Huguenot refugees from Rouen who had fled to the Netherlands around 1685. His *Traité de la liberté* and clandestine versions of the *Traité des miracles* and *Traité des oracles* have been edited recently by Alain Niderst (ed. 1996); his materialism and determinism have been studied by Carmelo Romeo (1982) and his relation to Spinozism by Jean Dagen (1989). This last communication gives rise to an interesting debate,

in which Pierre Costabel evokes the possible influence on Fontenelle of writings by Mariotte, expressing ideas close to those which, in Fontenelle's texts, are generally attributed to the influence of Spinoza; like J. Dagen, A. Niderst insists on the Spinozism of the *Traité de la liberté*, but underlines the influence of Malebranche in other writings: is it a mask exploited by Fontenelle or a genuine hesitation? Following J. Dagen, Silvia Berti (1989) also underlines the influence of Spinoza on the *Essai sur l'origine des fables*. The whole range of positions from Descartes through Malebranche to Spinoza is present among the members of the Académie des Sciences. An interesting question is raised by the possible acquaintance of Fontenelle with Spinoza's *Korte Verhandelng*, published only in 1852: the same question is raised by G. Sheridan in the context of Boulainviller's manuscript treatises.

The attribution to Fontenelle of *La République des philosophes, ou Histoire des Ajaoiens* (published only in 1768) is gradually gaining credence thanks to the work of Hans-Günter Funke (ed. 1982): a new French edition will be out soon, including a study of the Spinozist philosophy of the Ajaoiens (1996). It is this 'Chinese' philosophy, inherited from Spinoza, which links the *Histoire des Ajaoiens* to another clandestine manuscript: the *Réflexions sur l'argument de M. Pascal et de M. Locke*, and suggests, to my mind, that Fontenelle is also the author of the latter text (A. McKenna 1989). Alain Niderst (1994) goes over these questions in a recent article on clandestine manuscripts attributed to Fontenelle and the exploitation of Fontenelle's texts in clandestine literature.

Another author of imaginary voyages escaped P. Vernière's eagle eye: Simon Tyssot de Patot proposes an excellent résumé of the most advanced ideas of clandestine philosophy in his *Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé*. He has often been regarded as a disciple of Bayle, but, after editing Tyssot's novel (ed. 1993), Aubrey Rosenberg has now dated most of the *Lettres choisies* published in 1714 and demonstrates that Tyssot advances these ideas before the publication of Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*: there can be no doubt, as he shows in a recent article (1993), that Tyssot is to be regarded as a disciple of Spinoza.

Among those who contribute to the diffusion of Spinoza's *Ethics*, P. Vernière (p. 235) mentions Caspar Langenhert. M. Benítez (1995) demonstrates, in a recent volume of his articles, that among Langenhert's manuscripts are those collected by the abbé Sepher under the name of "Languener", now at Aix-en-Provence (cf M.G.

Zaccone-Sina 1984-85, and A. McKenna 1995): they include Boulainviller's *Exposition des sentiments de Spinoza* and his *Apologie de Spinoza sur Dieu et la nature*. M. Benitez mentions also another manuscript of Langenhert: *Methodus refutandi opus posthumum Benedicti de Spinoza* (Mazarine ms 1119, fo. 1-10).

Boulainviller's role in the diffusion of Spinozism is now well documented. His Spinozist manuscripts are the following: *Abrégé ou Courte expression de l'opinion de Spinoza touchant la Divinité, l'esprit humain et les fondements de la morale*, *Extrait du Traité théologo-politique de Spinoza*, followed by a *Réfutation de quelques-uns de ses sentiments*, *Essay de métaphysique dans les principes de Spinoza*, *Exposition du système de Benoît de Spinoza*, followed by a *Défense contre les objections de M. Regis*. His *Essay de métaphysique* was first published by Lenglet Dufresnoy in 1731: Geraldine Sheridan has provided a very complete study of the editor and the work (1989, 1996) and demonstrates in the present volume that Boulainviller was well acquainted with Spinoza's *Korte Verhandelng*, which is the starting point for the *Essay*. The *Essay* has been published by Renée Simon (ed. 1973), and Boulainviller's peculiar version of Spinozism has been well studied by Jean Deprun (1990), who enumerates borrowings from Descartes and Malebranche, by M. Benítez (1992) and by Stefano Brogi (1993). Gianluca Mori (1994) strongly questions the attribution to Boulainviller of the French translation of the *Ethics* published by F. Colonna d'Istria in 1907. Diego Venturini has published an excellent study of Boulainviller's historical thought (1993), and has devoted an article (1992) to Boulainviller's implicit critique of Christian Revelation in his *Vie de Mohammed* (1730). Bibliographical problems raised by Boulainviller's work are treated by H.E. Ellis (1988) in his study of aristocratic politics, and an unknown collection of manuscripts, belonging to Thomas Pichon and containing a number of copies of Boulainviller's work, is detailed by Geneviève Artigas-Menant (1994).

Among the more isolated figures who contribute to the diffusion of Spinozism around 1700, Theodor-Ludwig Lau is barely mentioned by P. Vernière. Lau's *Meditationes philosophicae de Deo, Mundo et Homine* (1717) and the French translation published around 1770 have been studied by Henri Coulet (1982); Martin Pott has produced a new edition of the Latin text with a German introduction (ed. 1992). In the same series, Winfried Schröder (ed. 1994) has edited Johann Georg Wachter's *Der Spinozismus im Judenthumb* (1699),

which played a role, as described by P. Vernière, in the spurious association of Spinoza with Jewish Kabbal; Wachter is, however, a much more interesting figure than Vernière thought, and W. Schröder (1996) has shown that he is one of the very first philosophers (before Humphrey Prideaux in 1716-1718) to suggest that Christ was a member of the Essenian sect, and therefore that Christianity was of human, historical, and not divine, origin. Wachter was promptly banned as a Spinozist and his academic career was ruined. Another German philosopher of the early German Enlightenment, Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch did not enter P. Vernière's corpus, but the great variety of his sources, including Spinoza, has been underlined by W. Schröder in his recent edition of *Concordia rationis et fidei* (1692); G. Totaro (1990) has suggested that, as revealed by his *Adnotationes* to the *TTP*, Stosch may be in correspondence with Prosper Marchand. W. Schröder has furthermore demonstrated (1991) the debt to the *TTP* of an anonymous manuscript, probably composed by a German philosopher, around the turn of the century: *Symbolum Sapientiae*, which turns Spinoza's arguments to good use in its very radical religious and political critique of religion. This manuscript circulated in a number of copies, including a German translation, and was known to contemporary radicals such as Johann Christian Edelmann. Finally, the field of early German reception of Spinoza is covered by W. Schröder in his excellent *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* (1987) and in his edition (ed. 1992) of Reimann's *Universal History of Atheism*; Reimann was a connoisseur and his *Catalogus* of 1731 gives a running commentary on all the *clandestina* he could get his hands on: he is the best witness to the spread of freethought in Germany in the early 18th century.

Spinoza is held responsible by P. Vernière for the spread of pantheism towards the end of the 17th century, and, in the eyes of M. Benítez (1987), it is indeed pantheism which characterises clandestine philosophy of this period. Relevant to this field, Malebranche's correspondence with Dortous de Mairan was edited some time ago by André Robinet (ed. 1961). J.S. Spink's work on *French Free-Thought* (1960) highlighted the importance of the doctrine of the *âme ignée*, and commented on its presence in a passage borrowed from Guillaume Lamy in the clandestine manuscript *L'Ame matérielle*. This latter text has since been edited by Alain Niderst (ed. 1969), and a second edition will soon be available. Guillaume

Lamy's *Discours anatomiques* (1675) and *Explication mechanique et physique des fonctions de l'âme sensitive* have been brilliantly edited by Anna Minerbi Belgrado (ed. 1995); their importance in the development of anti-finalist philosophy has been analysed by Sergio Landucci (1978) and the question of their influence on 18th century materialism has been raised by Ann Thomson (1992).

"Dieu, c'est-à-dire la Nature": the pantheist interpretation of Spinoza is exemplified by the *Traité des trois imposteurs* or *Esprit de Benoît de Spinoza*, of which innumerable copies have been discovered recently; first published in 1719, it contains the first French translation of the Appendix of the first part of the *Ethics* – the critique of final causes, of anthropocentrism, of common notions of good and evil. This clandestine work has received much attention recently: thesis and articles by Françoise Charles-Daubert (1990, 1993, 1995), articles by Sylvia Berti (1986, 1991, 1995), B.E. Schwarzbach and A.W. Fairbairn (1995) and M. Benítez (1995), and a seminar organised by Richard Popkin (1995); critical editions have been produced by S. Berti (ed. 1994) and Fr. Charles-Daubert (ed. 1995); another is promised by M. Benítez. A full bibliography will be found in the *Lettre clandestine*. The hunt for the original author has now narrowed to Jan Vroes; the hunt for sources has spread to the *libertins érudits*; the hunt for the editor has narrowed to Jean Rousset de Missy, on whom the best existing study is that of Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck and Jeroom Vercruysse (1993). These studies confirm the general picture given by P. Vernière: the exploitation of Spinoza and the deformation of Spinozism.

A similar deformation is studied by M. Benítez (1990) in an author unnoticed by P. Vernière: Yves de Vallone (1666/7-1705), canon of the church of Sainte-Geneviève, convert to protestantism in 1697 and refugee in Holland, composed at the end of his life *La Religion du chrétien*, a treatise of naturalistic pantheism strongly influenced by Spinoza; three copies of the manuscript work are now known.

Among other authors responsible for the spread of pantheism, P. Vernière mentions Lévésque de Burigny, to whom a number of clandestine manuscripts have been attributed: an excellent edition of his *De l'Examen de la religion* has been established by Sergio Landucci (ed. 1995); an edition of the *Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne*, in which the influence of the *TTP* weighs heavily, is in preparation by Alain Niderst. Mentioned in passing by P. Vernière, Pierre Frédéric Arpe, author of the *Apologia pro Vanino* (1712) is little known; however, he is associated with the circulation

of the *pseudo-Vallée*, or *Ars nihil credendi*, and of an English translation of Bruno's *Spaccio della bestia trionfante*, and has recently been studied by Martin Mulsow (1994, 1995), who gives some detail concerning the manuscripts collected by the open-minded Arpe: the *Breve compendium de tribus impostoribus*, the *Esprit de Spinoza*, and texts by Beverland, Lau, Stosch, Knutzen, Postel, and a bibliography of Servet.

Among British readers of Spinoza figures John Toland, most of whose works were available in France in manuscript translation: a conference was recently devoted to Toland by Geneviève Brykman (1994), and critical editions of his works are being prepared by Pierre Lurbe and Justin Champion; Toland's relation to Spinoza has been detailed by P. Lurbe (1990, 1992), and his materialism has also been studied by Manlio Iofrida (1992). Critical editions of Anthony Collins are also announced by David Berman and John Drury: the impact of Spinoza in England thus weighs in the influence of British freethinkers on the continent. By his association with the Lévêque brothers and by his collaboration with Prosper Marchand on the editorial board of the *Journal littéraire* and *L'Europe savante*, Saint-Hyacinthe, who spent some time in England, holds a certain status in the clandestine world; this has recently been underlined by Alain Niderst (1980) and in a detailed study by Elisabeth Carayol (1984). Pierre Coste is little known, except as translator of the very ungrateful John Locke: a manuscript biography of Coste, composed by his friend Charles de La Motte, will appear shortly, annotated by Cristina Pitassi, with the French translation of Locke's *Essay on Saint Paul's Epistles* (ed. C. Pitassi) and of *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (ed. H. Bouchilloux). Desmaizeaux, also mentioned by Vernière in his pages on pantheism, played a vital role in correspondence between huguenot refugees in England and the Netherlands: the studies by J.H. Broome are well-known; Joseph Almagor (1989) recently published an inventory of Desmaizeaux' vast correspondence, and a publication project is underway.

Another associate of Prosper Marchand played a role in the diffusion of Spinozism: the marquis d'Argens is now better known by his correspondence edited by Steve Larkin (1984), by the work of Guillaume Pigeard de Gurbert (1992), and by a conference held in Aix-en-Provence (1990); the philosophical lessons of *Thérèse philosophe* are now known to be drawn from the widely-diffused clandestine manuscript *Examen de la religion dont on cherche l'éclaircissement*

de bonne foi. This latter text played an important role in the diffusion of a mechanistic determinism, in which no room is left for free will, nor for the Christian notion of guilt or remorse: studies by Gianluca Mori (1993, ed. 1996) trace Spinoza's influence in detail.

The *Examen* is the work of the young Du Marsais, as demonstrated by G. Mori, but the maturer philosopher is associated with Fréret in his rejection of Spinozist metaphysics: they refuse the very possibility of conceiving an entity as a 'unique substance'; they see in Spinoza a metaphysician who plays on words and who ignores experience. In their eyes, Spinoza's *substance* is an *abstraction* in the Lockean sense, a concept born of a number of particular ideas: S. Landucci (ed. 1986) underlines this rejection in Fréret's *Lettre de Thrasybule à Leucippe*, and G. Mori in Du Marsais' *Réflexions sur l'existence de l'âme et sur l'existence de Dieu* (1993).

Among the lesser disciples of Spinoza figures a friend of the abbé Conti, André-Robert Perrelle, discovered by Eric Briggs (1934), mentioned by P. Vernière and now edited by G. Mori (1992): Perrelle copies out all the allusions to Spinozist doctrine in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*. Another allusive figure is the curé Etienne Guillaume, who associated with the count of Plélo and Paradis Montcrif in the rue de Vaugirard; he is reputed by Mirabeau to have tried to complete the "imaginary treatise of the *Three Impostors*" and to have denied miracles, explaining them by natural causes. The Spinozist source is obvious to P. Vernière, who, however, did not know Etienne Guillaume's notorious work. A fragment of this Spinozist treatise has recently been identified by G. Mori (1993) with a manuscript to be found at the Arsenal: *Préface du Traité sur la religion de M. xxx*; this text was undoubtedly written in reaction to Houtteville's *Religion chrétienne prouvée par les faits* (1722), as has been demonstrated by M. Benítez (unpublished article): although there is some disagreement between specialists on the attribution of the manuscript to Etienne Guillaume, the elusive curé cannot escape for long and another French disciple of Spinoza will then be better known. Alain Mothu (1993, p.18, n.2.) indicates another line of investigation: the brothers Pierre-Charles ("l'ancien") et François-Louis ("le jeune") Jamet have been in evidence in a number of recent articles around the *Encyclopédie* and the circulation of clandestine manuscripts. Pierre-Charles is a provocative amateur philosopher: his *Essais métaphysiques* circulated in manuscript copies and offer a defense of Spinoza and an attack on the doctrine of Creation.

The picture of the influence of Spinoza in the 18th century has been further detailed by the conference organised by Olivier Bloch (1990). Françoise Weil gives an indication as to readership of Spinoza according to the sale-catalogues of private libraries: Spinoza's works figure in 34 catalogues between 1725 and 1766; 70 copies of the various editions of his works are offered for sale, of which 20 are put on the market between 1754 and 1758. These statistics can be completed by the commentary of François Moureau (1993) on the status of clandestine manuscripts in public book-sales. O. Bloch (1990) records the original refutation by Abraham Gaultier of Spinoza in his *Réponse* (1714), and suggests that he knew Spinoza only through Bayle and François Lamy; however, one of the manuscript versions of Gaultier's text, known under the title of *Parité de la vie et de la mort*, takes position against this refutation: the unknown scribe has a much clearer notion of Spinoza's system, and should be counted among his 18th century disciples. The different manuscript versions of the *Réponse* have now been edited and analysed by O. Bloch (ed. 1993). Other articles bring more detail to P. Vernière's pioneer work; in particular, Laurent Bove (1990) sees in Vauvenargues a disciple of Spinoza, a fact which had escaped P. Vernière; a further commentary on this question is provided in this volume. L. Bove has undertaken a critical edition of Vauvenargues' works, in which their status as philosophical commentaries on Spinoza will be made clear: Vauvenargues can no longer be regarded simply as a latter-day, conventional moralist. Lastly, apart from a number of interesting contributions on authors already studied by P. Vernière, we will mention the overall pictures of Spinoza in Germany and in Italy provided by Anne Lagny and Pierre-François Moreau (1990, cf. also M. Gilli 1983).

Jacqueline Lagrée (1989) has exhumed the manuscript translation of the *TTP* to be found at Grenoble Municipal Library: the author, "J.F. Prière", is now well known by the research of Françoise Weil (1994) on Joseph-Claude Raby, "M. Raby d'Amérique", whose enormous collection of manuscripts, many of which he composed himself, is in Grenoble, with copies at Rouen. Françoise Weil's edition of Raby's *Recherches sur l'origine et la nature de l'âme et sur l'existence de Dieu* (1770), his *Journal d'un voyage en Provence et en Italie* (1764), and his *Journal d'un voyage à Bordeaux, à Londres et en Hollande* (1775) will appear shortly.

More work undoubtedly remains to be done. The excellent arti-

cle of Jacqueline Lagrée and P.-Fr. Moreau (1989) on the interpretation of the Bible in the circle of Spinoza's friends and acquaintances has opened up new perspectives in the history of biblical exegesis, and one is tempted to compare Spinoza's position with that of Pascal: "Tout ce qui ne va point à la charité est figure". Apologists play an important role in P. Vernière's study, but more can be said of Bernard Lamy, for instance (cf Fr. Girbal, 1964, p. 96); an unpublished apology by François Lamy lies waiting in the Bibliothèque Nationale; Charles Porset and Alain Mothu (1995) announce an unknown manuscript refutation of Spinoza of around 1710; finally, Sylviane Albertan-Coppola's thesis will change the picture given by A. Monod in 1916, in which the defence of the Christian religion is reduced to a wishy-washy interpretation of Pascalian *sentiment*, announcing Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Chateaubriand. Indeed, if that picture were true, it is hard to understand how any Christians held on to their faith after 1670... Among freethinkers also, a number of promising studies are underway, including critical editions of Toland (ed. Justin Champion & Pierre Lurbe), Denis de Vairasse (ed. A. Rosenberg) and Maubec (ed. Gianni Paganini). Among those responsible for the diffusion of Spinozism, Jens Häselser (1993, 1994) has studied an interesting case in Charles Etienne Jordan.

Many clandestine manuscripts have yet to be analysed in relation to Spinoza, and many new copies have been found of texts already registered. Claudia Stancati de Santis has prepared an edition of the *Dissertation sur la formation du monde*; Roland Mortier is working on the *Dialogues sur l'âme par les interlocuteurs en ce temps-là*; Antonella Del Prete is preparing a commentary on the *Jordanus Brunus redivivus*; a little-known manuscript by one Depaquit, entitled *L'Unité de substance* sounds promising (dating from the end of the 18th century, with allusions to Diderot and Robinet, it deals with materialism in six conversations, and is followed by a *Précis du système*: in the private collection of François Moureau).

The study of clandestine literature will thus contribute to the history of the deformation which characterises the reception of Spinoza's works in the 17th and 18th centuries.

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AUX ORIGINES DE L'ESSAI DE MÉTAPHYSIQUE DU COMTE DE BOULAINVILLER: LE KORTE VERHANDELING

Geraldine Sheridan

L'*Essai de métaphysique* est bien connu de tous ceux qui s'intéressent au spinozisme en France au dix-huitième siècle, surtout la version publiée par Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy en 1731 dans le volume intitulé *Réfutation des erreurs de Benoît de Spinoza*.¹ Par exemple, dans un passé récent, Charles Porset s'est efforcé de montrer l'influence de cet ouvrage dans l'oeuvre de Voltaire, suivant en cela les vérifications textuelles faites autrefois par Paul Hazard:² il aurait pu, d'ailleurs, rajouter une preuve concluante, dans la mesure où l'exemplaire de la *Réfutation* qui appartenait à Voltaire se trouve à Saint Pétersbourg et a été décrit par Norman Torrey.³ Voltaire y a marqué certains passages clé de l'*Essai* qu'il voulait repérer par la suite et dont on peut retrouver la trace dans son oeuvre: par exemple, aux pages 46-47 il a noté "De Dieu" là où Boulainviller exposait le rejet par Spinoza de l'idée d'un Dieu juge des actions des hommes, rémunérateur et vengeur, idées qui sont "les sources très-fécondes de toutes les superstitions du monde" et aux pages 180-181, il attire l'attention sur l'argument contre le libre arbitre et la proposition qui pose que le corps ne détermine point l'esprit à penser et l'esprit ne détermine point le corps à agir.

Cependant, si nous ne savons pas à quelle date Voltaire a acquis sa *Réfutation*, ce qui serait intéressant à plusieurs points de vue, nous pouvons au moins nous demander combien d'exemplaires en ont pu circuler en France. C'est à Amsterdam, où Lenglet avait des contacts établis dans le monde des livres, que la *Réfutation* a été imprimée,

¹ (Bruxelles [Amsterdam], Foppens, 1731).

² "Notes sur Voltaire et Spinoza", dans: *Spinoza au XVIIIe siècle*, éd. O. Bloch (Paris, 1990), p. 229 et suiv., et note 46; il cite P. Hazard, "Voltaire et Spinoza", *Modern philology* 38 (1941), p. 361.

³ "Boulainvilliers: the Man and the Mask", *Studies on Voltaire and the 18th Century* 1 (1955), p. 172-173.

malgré l'indication Bruxelles à la page de titre,⁴ faux-fuyant qui était plus rare en Hollande qu'en France et qui suggère combien le 'spinozisme' était honni dans ce pays.⁵ Nous avons des témoignages contradictoires sur la circulation du livre, mais la première chose à constater est qu'il n'a jamais été réimprimé: fait étonnant pour un ouvrage tant recherché, vu que Lenglet Dufresnoy était fort vif sur ses intérêts et savait tout le profit qu'il aurait pu en tirer. Il se trouve qu'il a été désigné en tant qu'éditeur par la *Bibliothèque raisonnée* dès août-septembre 1731 et son statut d'"Ecclésiastique Catholique Romain" a été malicieusement souligné, ce qui a dû lui faire peur;⁶ rappelons que la Sorbonne réservait ses poursuites les plus acharnées pour ceux qui avaient reçu les ordres. Guillaume de Bure affirme dans la *Bibliographie instructive* que "La *Réfutation* a été supprimée et elle est plus rare que l'ouvrage de Spinoza".⁷ En effet, Françoise Weil a trouvé trace de quatre saisies à la Chambre syndicale des libraires de Paris entre novembre 1730 et novembre 1735. Presque toujours un *Spinoza*—non-décrit—est saisi en même temps mais les quantités d'exemplaires ne sont malheureusement pas indiquées dans les archives sauf pour une saisie faite en 1739 sur un certain Stella, maître d'hôtel de l'ambassadeur de Venise, envoyé à la Bastille pour vente de livres prohibés; parmi les livres saisis figurent 58 *Réfutation de Spinoza*, 41 *Spinoza* et 34 *Vie de Spinoza*.⁸ On peut néanmoins supposer que quelques centaines d'exemplaires aient été saisis mais on n'est pas autorisé à croire pour autant qu'ils aient été mis au pilon: ils auraient pu se retrouver dans la circulation à un moment ultérieur. En tout cas, les travaux de Paul Vernière, et plus récemment de Françoise Weil, nous indiquent que l'édition a eu une grande dissémination en France: sur 79 catalogues de bibliothèques privées publiées entre 1731 et 1739, 25 comprenaient l'édi-

⁴ See Geraldine Sheridan, *Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy and the Literary Underworld of the Ancien Régime* (Oxford, 1989), p. 135.

⁵ Les dangers sont soulignés par les journalistes du *Journal littéraire* publié à la Haye, vol. 19 (1732), p. 185-86: "L'ouvrage ne se vendait que sous le manteau, et nous crûmes qu'il était dangereux d'apprendre au Public, qu'on venait d'imprimer, dans une des principales Villes de ce Province, un Livre, dont le But, sous un faux titre, étoit d'établir le Spinosisme."

⁶ vol. 7, p. 186.

⁷ (Paris, 1763-1768), article no. 869.

⁸ "La Diffusion en France avant 1750 de textes dits clandestins", dans: *Le Matérialisme du XVIII^e siècle et la littérature clandestine*, éd. O. Bloch (Paris, 1982), p. 207-208.

tion de Lenglet, d'où M. Vernière a conclu que le succès en fut prodigieux.⁹ Et Mme Weil, qui a examiné 34 catalogues de ventes de bibliothèques particulières parisiennes des années 1725 à 1766, a retrouvé 31 propriétaires d'une *Réfutation*.¹⁰ Ces chiffres suggèrent qu'une bonne proportion de l'édition a été importée en France dans les années suivant sa publication.

On a essayé d'attribuer à Lenglet Dufresnoy la responsabilité d'avoir créé avec sa *Réfutation* la "légende Boulainviller", celle d'un spinoziste dissimulé, agent de propagande anti-religieux: on a même affirmé que la "Préface de Monsieur le comte de Boulainviller" était une fabrication de la main de Lenglet.¹¹ Mais il n'en est rien: cette "Préface"¹² est, au contraire, très fidèle à "l'Avertissement" de Boulainviller qu'on retrouve dans tous les manuscrits, et qui est, sans nul doute, contemporain de l'*Essai* lui-même. Il suffit de jeter un coup d'oeil sur le papier et les reliures des exemplaires de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal pour en être persuadé. D'ailleurs, il est intéressant que la *Vie de Spinoza* par Lucas, "Sectateur fidèle de ce Philosophe",¹³ et même le très subversif *Esprit de Spinoza* (version du *Traité des trois imposteurs*) se retrouvaient couramment reliés dans le même volume que l'*Essai de métaphysique* dans ce que Vernière appelle un "*corpus spinozanum*".¹⁴ Tel est le cas pour un des exemplaires de l'*Essai de métaphysique* qui semblent être les plus proches de l'original, l'exemplaire 2236 de l'Arsenal, qui était relié à l'origine aux armes de Samuel Bernard, le même dont le fils a épousé la fille de Boulainviller; cette copie est entrée ensuite dans la bibliothèque du marquis d'Argenson. Un autre exemplaire, Arsenal 2235, relié aux armes des Argenson, a été transmis par le marquis d'Argenson, grand ami personnel de Boulainviller, directement à son fils, le marquis de Paulmy, fondateur de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal; cette copie est moins opulente mais plus correcte que la copie 2236, et pourrait bien être une copie faite dans le cabinet de Boulainviller de la main d'un secrétaire. Ce manuscrit contient la

⁹ Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1954), p. 374.

¹⁰ "La Curiosité pour Spinoza révélée par les catalogues de vente", dans: *Spinoza au XVIII^e siècle*, éd. Bloch, p. 99-100.

¹¹ Voir Torrey, "Boulainvilliers: the Man and the Mask".

¹² Boulainviller, *Réfutation*, p. 151-158.

¹³ *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 7 (juillet, août et septembre 1731), p. 165.

¹⁴ Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 321.

Vie, mais non pas l'*Esprit*, mais celui-ci est pourtant mentionné au titre et a dû y être réuni à un moment donné. D'après ces deux manuscrits si proches de l'auteur, on peut constater la création très tôt d'une certaine mythologie subversive autour du texte de Boulainviller; il serait d'un grand intérêt de retrouver le manuscrit original—mais qui n'existe peut-être pas ou plus—et de savoir si le comte a lui-même institué cette collection, cette confrontation de textes.

Ce qui est sûr, en tout cas, c'est que dans le milieu de ses amis et admirateurs les plus proches, la portée subversive de son travail a été clairement perçue et rapidement exploitée. La réputation de Boulainviller comme sympathisant spinoziste était donc déjà bien établie quand Lenglet a songé à faire son édition; il n'avait plus qu'à s'approprier les trois éléments (la *Vie*, l'*Avertissement* et l'*Essai*) qui ensemble composent presque les trois quarts de son volume, en les camouflant légèrement sous le titre de *Réfutation* qui ne trompait nullement un public avisé. Et même ce titre-là lui a été suggéré par l'*Avertissement* de Boulainviller que j'ai déjà mentionné: Boulainviller déclare avoir voulu exposer la pensée de Spinoza dans toute sa clarté pour qu'un autre que lui puisse en faire la réfutation. C'est une remarque peu convaincante et dont on peut se demander quelle était sa fonction dans un ouvrage qu'il ne destinait pas à la publication: est-ce une indication que Boulainviller savait dès l'abord que son ouvrage serait lu par un public relativement large et se préparait-il une défense dans le cas d'une intervention de la police? Il y a beaucoup de questions à propos de ce texte qui restent encore sans réponse mais ce que je veux souligner, quant à la *Réfutation*, c'est que Lenglet Dufresnoy, suivant les traces de Boulainviller, voulait faire connaître Spinoza et il en a donné un signal très clair dans le titre en mentionnant la "*Vie Manuscrite de ce Philosophe, faite par un de ses Amis*".¹⁵

Que Boulainviller l'ait voulu ou non, l'*Essai* occupe une place de choix dans la littérature clandestine manuscrite qui peut être mieux évaluée maintenant dans le contexte de l'inventaire de ces manuscrits qui se poursuit dans le séminaire d'Olivier Bloch à Paris I. Le

¹⁵ J'ai traité plus longuement des autres textes inclus dans la *Réfutation*, et des circonstances de sa publication, dans *La Littérature clandestine. Actes de la colloque de Saint-Etienne* qui sont en cours d'édition par Antony McKenna.

nombre d'exemplaires identifiés jusqu'à présent confirme le rayonnement de l'*Essai* en forme manuscrite en France et à l'étranger. On connaît actuellement 18 copies du texte original et 3 copies d'une version remaniée de la première partie seulement.¹⁶ Certaines copies portent la date de 1712, d'autres de 1714, mais les textes des deux catégories se réclament d'avoir été copiés sur l'original de l'auteur. Pour l'instant, nulle trace d'un manuscrit olographe. Il n'est pas sûr qu'il ait existé dans la mesure où Boulainviller se servait d'un secrétaire. Seule une collation exhaustive, que j'entreprends pour une nouvelle édition, pourra éclaircir la filiation des divers textes et indiquera peut-être de quelle copie Lenglet Dufresnoy s'est servi pour établir son édition: "la même qu'il [Boulainviller] voulut confier en mourant à un de ses amis" déclare-t-il dans son Avertissement. En tout cas, il est clair que certaines des copies ont été faites par des individus pour leur propre usage et probablement écrites de leur propre main: par exemple la version remaniée est une sorte de résumé fait par un particulier à ses propres fins. D'autres copies ont été faites par des copistes professionnels, soit sur commande dans une bibliothèque personnelle, soit dans les ateliers de copistes clandestins qui existaient à Paris et certainement ailleurs aussi.¹⁷ On sait, par exemple, que l'exemplaire du baron Hohendorff, ami et conseiller du prince Eugène de Savoie, qui se trouve encore dans la Bibliothèque Nationale à Vienne, a été copié avec la permission du propriétaire: les exemplaires à Dresde et à Krikovlat-château, Prague portent une note qui l'indique. D'ailleurs, on peut remarquer que Lenglet Dufresnoy a passé en 1721 quatre mois à Vienne où il était ami avec Etienne Boyet, relieur du prince Eugène.¹⁸ C'est peut-être précisément à ce moment-là qu'il a formé l'idée de son édition: nous savons d'après le travail de Françoise Charles-Daubert qu'entre 1715 et 1719 plusieurs copies de la *Vie et l'esprit de Spinoza* ont été

¹⁶ Version originale: Angoulême 29; Auxerre 235-236; Auxerre 237 (Première partie seulement); Chaumont 195; Dresden N 68; Krivoklat-Château: d9 (Musée National de Prague); Laon 514; Madrid 9778; Paris-Arsenal 2235; Arsenal 2236; Paris-B.N. 9111; B.N. 12242-43; Paris-Mazarine 3558; Toulouse 757; Troyes 2820; Valenciennes 295; Wien 10399 (Hohendorff. Q. 10); Wittenberg, Evangelisches Prediger Seminar 29. Version remaniée: Besançon 418; La Flèche-Prytanée Milit. 6; Mazarine 3560.

¹⁷ Voir Ira O. Wade, *The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France from 1700 to 1750* (Princeton, 1938), p. 5 et suiv.

¹⁸ Voir Sheridan, *Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy*, p. 80 et suiv.

faites dans la bibliothèque du prince Eugène avec la permission du baron Hohendorff.¹⁹ Il s'agissait donc, peut-être, d'un véritable centre de diffusion des idées spinozistes, des manuscrits clandestins, qui ait pu encourager Lenglet à tenter une distribution plus large en France d'un texte si apprécié et fort demandé à l'échelon européen.

Passons maintenant à la question de savoir ce qu'est l'*Essai de métaphysique dans les principes de B. de Sp.*, titre qu'on retrouve dans la plupart des copies manuscrites. Un "remaniement de l'*Ethique*", Vernière a conclu, organisé non en cinq livres mais en deux parties, "négligeant la théorie de la connaissance du second livre et la doctrine du bonheur du cinquième".²⁰ Spink a remarqué ensuite que, quoique dans la deuxième partie de l'*Essai*, intitulé "Des passions", Boulainviller se serve quelquefois de la partie IV de l'*Ethique* (et, on peut ajouter, de la partie III), il n'y a rien dans l'*Essai* qui corresponde à la partie V, "De la puissance de l'entendement, ou de la liberté de l'homme", qui contient l'essentiel de la doctrine morale de Spinoza.²¹ Mais pour qui lit attentivement le texte, ceci n'étonne plus: Boulainviller nous indique lui-même que l'ouvrage est inachevé. Dans son "Avertissement" il parle des "trois traités suivants",²² et dans le texte de la première partie il avertit:

Je ne distinguerai point ici les idées par rapport à la sensibilité et aux affections du sujet pensant. Ce sera l'objet de la seconde partie de ce traité, ni par rapport aux jugements qu'elles contiennent, qui feront la matière de la troisième.²³

Et au début de la deuxième partie, "Des passions", Boulainviller déclare:

Je ne tirerais que la moindre partie de l'utilité que je me suis proposée dans cette recherche si je n'examinais: 1^o mes affections, et 2^o la puissance que l'on suppose être en moi de les gouverner.²⁴

¹⁹ "L'Image de Spinoza dans la littérature clandestine et *L'Esprit de Spinoza*", dans: *Spinoza au XVIII^e siècle*, éd. Bloch, p. 51-74.

²⁰ Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 317.

²¹ John S. Spink, *French Free-Thought from Gassendi to Voltaire* (London, 1960), p. 272.

²² Je citerai le manuscrit 2235 de la bibliothèque de l'Arsenal qui appartenait au marquis d'Argenson, ami de Boulainviller, et qui, pour l'instant, présente le texte le plus correct. Ce chiffre, qui se trouve p. 1, a été omis par Lenglet Dufresnoy dans la "Préface de M. le comte de Boullainvilliers" (p. 151-158 de sa *Réfutation*) qui par ailleurs est proche de l'original: conscient de la contradiction, Lenglet a mis simplement "les Traités suivants".

²³ p. 82.

²⁴ p. 139.

Il avait donc l'intention de combler les lacunes qu'on a constatées dans son texte dans une troisième partie qu'il n'aurait jamais écrite. D'ailleurs, le manuscrit tel qu'on le connaît se termine abruptement sur les mots "ce que j'ai dit jusque ici suffit pour prendre une notion certaine de la mécanique de nos passions", et appelle une suite. Mais c'est précisément parce qu'il n'existe que deux parties de l'*Essai*, intitulées "De l'être en général et en particulier", et "Des passions", que Simon et Vernière ont été frappés par le fait que cette structure est très proche de celle de l'oeuvre antérieure de Spinoza, le *Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en deszelvs Welstand*,²⁵ dont les deux parties s'appellent "De Dieu" et "De l'homme et de ce qui lui appartient" dans la traduction d'Appuhn.²⁶ Comme le *Court traité* n'a été publié qu'en 1862, Vernière a passé rapidement sur cette "coïncidence" qu'il s'expliquait par un commun "effort pédagogique de vulgarisation" qui aurait motivé Boulainviller et Spinoza.²⁷ Pourtant Vernière avait déjà travaillé sur un texte qui présentait dans son titre une "coïncidence" encore plus frappante et aurait dû le mettre en garde: dans la collection des "Extraits des lectures de M. le comte de Boulainviller avec des réflexions" se trouve un petit texte qui s'appelle "Abrégé ou courte exposition de l'opinion de Spinoza touchant la divinité, l'esprit humain et les fondements de la morale",²⁸ ce qui évoque à la fois le titre du *Court traité* et les trois divisions que Boulainviller a choisi pour son *Essai*. Dans le tome 2 des "Extraits" à la Bibliothèque nationale, ce texte précède l'analyse du *Tractatus* qui est bien connu et qui date probablement de 1694-1695,²⁹ quoiqu'on ne puisse pas trop se fier à ce que l'ordre des pièces dans ce manuscrit soit chronologique, il semble néanmoins probable que ces notes précèdent de beaucoup le travail que Boulainviller a consacré à l'*Ethique*: dans l'Avertissement à son *Essai*, il date de 1704

²⁵ Titre de la deuxième édition, en hollandais, donnée par Schaarschmidt en 1869 (Amsterdam); la première édition, en hollandais avec une traduction latine, fut donnée par Van Vloten en 1862: *Ad Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia Supplementum* (Amsterdam).

²⁶ (Paris, 1964).

²⁷ Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 317.

²⁸ On connaît deux copies complètes de ces "Extraits des lectures": Paris, B.N., ms. fonds franç., nouv.acq., 11.071 à 11.076, et Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale, 15.168-82, et il y en a plusieurs copies partielles dont celle de la Bibliothèque municipale de Fécamp (ms.24) présente le texte le plus correct, et est celle que je citerai (p. 239-280).

²⁹ Voir Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, p. 308 et suiv.

l'achat des "ouvrages posthumes" de Spinoza, et l'étude systématique de l'*Ethique*. Mais avant cette date, nous dit-il, il avait eu entre les mains deux réfutations de l'*Ethique*: une par le père Lamy (sans doute le *Nouvel athéisme renversé* publié en 1696 dont Lenglet Dufresnoy publiera un extrait dans sa *Réfutation*), et "l'autre manuscrite, par un Hollandais que j'ai cru socinien". Cette mention d'un manuscrit hollandais est d'une importance capitale et nous met en droit de nous demander si Boulainviller avait accès à d'autres ouvrages manuscrits provenant de sources proches du spinozisme hollandais, et s'il aurait pu connaître le *Court traité* comme le titre de son "Abrégé" nous le suggère.

On sait depuis longtemps que le *Court traité*, composé ou dicté en latin par Spinoza, et ensuite traduit en hollandais, était connu dans le cercle immédiat de ses disciples.³⁰ Des travaux plus récents confirment que le texte a eu un certain rayonnement: par exemple Wiep van Bunge a démontré que le collégiant Johannes Bredenburg à Rotterdam avait très probablement obtenu une copie avant 1675.³¹ Mais jusqu'à présent rien ne nous autorisait à croire que le texte ait été connu en France au tournant du siècle, la première traduction française n'apparaissant qu'en 1878. S'il existait des copies manuscrites en hollandais en plus de celles qui ont été découvertes entre 1852 et 1861, ce qui est fort probable, combien de français auraient été à même de lire un texte difficile dans cette langue, même en supposant qu'ils aient eu une copie entre les mains? Et dans les manuscrits de la tradition clandestine catalogués par Wade ou Benítez, on ne trouve nulle trace, pour l'instant, d'une traduction française, ni d'un manuscrit latin, ce qui serait, évidemment, d'un intérêt capital pour les spinozistes.

Revenons aux notes intitulées "Abrégé"; celles-ci constituent un résumé d'une analyse de l'*Ethique* faite en vue d'une "réfutation entière", que l'"auteur de l'extrait",³² jamais nommé, aurait écrit ultérieurement, mais qui comprend déjà une part de réfutation,³³ et

³⁰ Voir "Notice relative au *Court traité*" dans l'édition de Charles Appuhn: Spinoza, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1964-1966), 4 vols., I, p. 13 et suiv., qui décrit les manuscrits connus.

³¹ "Johannes Bredenburg and the *Korte Verhandelng*", *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988), p. 321-328.

³² Fécamp, p. 259 et 260 (voir note 28).

³³ Voir, par exemple, Fécamp, p. 260: "il ajoute que le 4^e argument est manifestement faux, et d'une conséquence d'autant plus dangereuse, que l'on a la démonstration de la possibilité de la Création, laquelle étant une fois admise..."

pourrait bien être le manuscrit décrit par Boulainviller dans l'Avertissement à son *Essai*. Mais l'intérêt du texte réside surtout dans les commentaires ajoutés, par Boulainviller à ce qu'il paraît, et qui sont signalés clairement dans le manuscrit de Fécamp par des guillemets; ils indiquent la distance déjà prise par Boulainviller vis-à-vis de l'orthodoxie plus grande de "celui qui a fait cet extrait" et ils me semblent prouver que Boulainviller connaissait le *Court traité*.³⁴ Il y en a cinq dont le plus long et le plus conséquent se trouve aux pages 250-252. Le résumé de l'*Ethique* s'était porté sur la Scolie I de la proposition 10 et particulièrement sur ces phrases de Spinoza:

Il n'est rien, au contraire, dans la nature de plus clair que ceci: un être absolument infini doit être nécessairement défini un être qui est constitué par une infinité d'attributs dont chacun exprime une certaine essence éternelle et infinie. Si l'on demande maintenant à quel signe nous pourrions donc reconnaître la diversité des substances, qu'on lise les Propositions suivantes: elles montrent qu'il n'existe dans la nature qu'une substance unique et qu'elle est absolument infinie, ce qui fait qu'on chercherait vainement un tel signe.³⁵

Le commentaire de Boulainviller, clairement indiqué par les guillemets, est comme suit:

Celui qui a fait cet Extrait, n'ayant trouvé nulle part dans les ouvrages de l'auteur, aucune de ces prétendues propositions démonstratives, dit qu'il ne peut par conséquent en donner aucun éclaircissement, et il assure que l'eau a manqué à Sp. dans cet endroit, d'autant qu'on peut supposer [qu'il est impossible à tout homme de proposer]³⁶ des moyens qui renferment plus d'évidence et de certitude dans l'idée d'une substance unique, que l'on ne trouve de clarté et de solidité dans la conclusion de la multiplicité des substances, tirée de la pluralité des attributs.

Il semble que celui qui a fait cet Extrait a oublié de donner la définition de la substance que nous disons être, non ce qui est étendu ou pensant, mais ce qui existe par soi-même. Sans laquelle définition on n'aurait l'idée d'aucune chose existante. C'est donc cette définition qui

³⁴ La copie à la Bibliothèque Nationale est fautive en ce qu'elle omet quelquefois ces guillemets. Quoique Renée Simon ait signalé la supériorité du texte de Fécamp, elle n'a pas comblé cette lacune, ce qui enlève beaucoup à l'utilité du texte qu'elle a publié dans Henry de Boulainviller. *Oeuvres philosophiques*, éd. Renée Simon (La Haye, 1973-1975), 2 vols., I, p. 1-9.

³⁵ Voir la traduction de Charles Appuhn dans Spinoza, *Oeuvres* III, p. 30.

³⁶ Variante, B.N. 11.072, f. 31 v.

prouve qu'il n'y a point de substance de différent attribut parce que le seul attribut qui convienne par la définition, est l'existence de soi-même; l'étendue ou la pensée sont des attributs adjectifs, et non essentiels, par la définition de la substance, et qui par conséquent tombent au rang des modes par rapport à l'existence, comme les idées par rapport à la pensée, ou les figures par rapport à l'extension. Donc la pluralité de ces attributs n'infère point la pluralité des substances, n'y ayant véritablement que celle qui existe par soi même.

Cette description des "attributs adjectifs" de l'étendue et de la pensée, qui les compare aux modes, est évidemment étrangère aux définitions de l'*Ethique*. Ceci préfigure, d'ailleurs, les ambiguïtés de l'*Essai de métaphysique* qui ont déjà été soulignées par la critique:³⁷ comment se fait-il qu'à certains endroits Boulainviller puisse accepter que "Dieu et l'universalité des êtres sont la même chose",³⁸ ce qui renvoie à la notion plus ancienne du Grand Tout, quand par ailleurs sa définition des attributs est un peu plus proche de l'*Ethique*: "ce que l'Esprit connaît de la substance, ou ce sans quoi il n'en aurait pas l'idée", même si cela n'est pas exactement non plus ce que voulait dire Spinoza.³⁹ Mais loin d'être dû à l'incapacité de Boulainviller à suivre la méthode "mathématique" de Spinoza, il résulte peut-être tout simplement de l'influence que retient dans son esprit le *Court traité*. Considérons ce passage du premier dialogue de la première partie où "La Raison" adresse "La Concupiscence":

Ce que tu dis, ô Concupiscence, qu'il y a des substances distinctes, cela, je te le dis, est faux; car je vois clairement qu'il y en a une *Unique*, laquelle *subsiste par elle-même* et est le soutien de tous les autres attributs. Et tout autant que tu veux nommer le corporel et le pensant des substances à l'égard des modes qui en dépendent, tout autant tu dois les nommer aussi des modes à l'égard de la substance dont ils dépendent; car ils ne sont pas conçus par toi comme subsistant par eux-mêmes; et de même que vouloir, sentir, entendre, aimer, etc. sont différents modes de ce que tu nommes une substance pensante, modes que tu ramènes tous à l'unité et dont tu ne fais qu'une seule chose, de même je conclus aussi, par tes propres démonstrations, que *l'étendue infinie et la pensée, assemblées avec d'autres attributs infinis* (ou dans ton lan-

³⁷ Voir, par exemple, Spink, *French Free-Thought*, p. 268 et suiv., et Miguel Benítez, "Un Spinozisme suspect: à propos du Dieu de Boulainvilliers", *Dix-huitième siècle* 24 (1992), p. 17-28.

³⁸ p. 49.

³⁹ p. 14.

gage d'autres substances) ne sont pas autre chose que des modes de l'être Unique, Eternel, Infini, Existant par lui-même.⁴⁰

L'intérêt de ce texte, si proche de celui que nous venons de trouver dans les notes de Boulainviller, surtout la dernière phrase, est d'autant plus grand que, d'après Charles Appuhn, il ne se retrouve nulle part ailleurs dans Spinoza;⁴¹ d'ailleurs, ce raisonnement qui prétend établir qu'ayant ramené la diversité des modes de la pensée à l'unité d'une même pensée substantielle, il est nécessaire de ramener de même la pensée substantielle et l'étendue substantielle à l'unité d'une même substance à la fois pensante et étendue, est assez difficile à entendre. Ainsi Spinoza l'abandonne dans les formulations plus serrées de l'*Ethique*. Mais ce qui nous intéresse ici, c'est la série des rapprochements entre le travail de Boulainviller et le *Court traité* qui ne peut nullement être le fait de la coïncidence. Il me semble mettre hors de doute que cette esquisse de la doctrine de Spinoza a été lue en France à une époque où on la croyait inconnue, et qu'elle a influencé Boulainviller dans l'interprétation de la pensée de Spinoza. Sans trop attribuer à une seule incidence connue, on est quand même en droit de se demander par quelle voie Boulainviller a eu accès au manuscrit du *Korte verhandeling* et à d'autres manuscrits hollandais? Qui l'a traduit en français pour le lui rendre accessible? Ou, possibilité encore plus provocante, a-t-il pu voir l'évasive version originale en latin? Ce qui semble être établi, c'est qu'il l'a lu avant d'avoir lu l'*Ethique* et il en a retenu la leçon quand il écrivait l'*Essai*, oeuvre qui a contribué, peut-être plus que toute autre, à la propagation du spinozisme en France. Cela explique peut-être pourquoi aucune mention n'est faite de l'*Ethique* dans le titre de l'*Essai*: Boulainviller se penchait sur plus d'un texte du philosophe. On ne peut pas trop en vouloir à Boulainviller s'il a été dérouté par les deux versions assez différentes du "système de Spinoza" dont il avait connaissance: s'il a eu en main un manuscrit du *Court traité*, il est peu probable qu'il ait disposé d'informations sur l'origine ni sur la datation de ce texte mystérieux. On lui reproche parfois une exégèse confuse et inexacte mais il lui aurait été difficile de résoudre le conflit entre les deux textes, conflit qui pose encore aujourd'hui bien des difficultés aux interprètes.⁴² En tout cas, si on accepte que son

⁴⁰ Spinoza, *Oeuvres* I, p. 59.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁴² Voir, par exemple, Edwin Curley, "Notes on the Immortality of the Soul in Spinoza's *Short Treatise*", *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 56 (1977), p. 327-336.

Essai se base sur le *Court traité* aussi bien que sur l'*Ethique*, cela nous oblige à réévaluer sa place dans l'histoire du spinozisme en Europe, ce qui sera le travail d'un autre jour.

Pour conclure, on peut se demander pourquoi Boulainviller a renoncé à écrire la troisième partie de son *Essai*, qu'il avait clairement annoncée: elle aurait correspondu aux six derniers chapitres du *Court traité* qui forment une sorte de "sous-section" comme le titre l'indique (...*deszelvs Welstand*) et elle se serait certainement adressée aux parties quatre et cinq de l'*Ethique*, à ce qui était au coeur de la philosophie de Spinoza, la théorie du bonheur. Est-ce l'entendement ou simplement le temps ou l'énergie qui lui a manqué? Si l'on n'a pas de réponse à cette question, on ne peut que regretter que, du fait de ce manque, les lecteurs francophones soit du manuscrit soit de la *Réfutation* de 1731 n'aient pu apprécier à sa pleine valeur la pensée de Spinoza.

LA POLITIQUE ET L'HISTOIRE: LE SPINOZISME DE VAUVENARGUES

Laurent Bove

Les écrits de Vauvenargues sont compris dans une brève période de moins de dix ans, de 1737 à 1747 année de sa mort. Né en 1715, le philosophe disparaît avant ses 32 ans. Ses écrits sont donc ceux d'un jeune homme qui a rencontré très tôt le stoïcisme latin mais aussi essentiellement Locke et Boulainviller par qui sans doute il a découvert Spinoza, sous le signe duquel il va inscrire l'ensemble de son oeuvre sans jamais toutefois nommer le philosophe hollandais.¹ Et cette inscription spinoziste secrète demeurera longtemps ignorée des commentateurs voire, par parti-pris, refoulée et—avec des pages entières et décisives de l'oeuvre—occultée...

Nous nous sommes, pour notre part, efforcé dans deux précédentes études, d'éclairer la vivante filiation spirituelle du philosophe aixois avec l'auteur de *l'Ethique*, successivement sur le plan de sa métaphysique, de son éthique et de sa théorie des passions.² Son

¹ Le nom de Spinoza apparaît une seule fois, mais indirectement, dans un Caractère intitulé *Eumolpe* ou *le Mauvais poète*. Spinoza y est mentionné auprès de Pascal et de Newton, c'est-à-dire les plus grands esprits des XVII^{ème} et XVIII^{ème} siècles (G.I, p. 362). Vauvenargues a lu Locke (lettre à Mirabeau du 30-05-1739, G.II, p. 133) et il apprécie "la profondeur méthodique" du philosophe anglais (lettre du 4-04-1743 à Voltaire, G.II, p. 246) ainsi que "les sages vérités" que contiennent ses écrits (G.I, no. 280, p. 413). Vauvenargues critique cependant Locke sur sa conception de la liberté et de la puissance (G.I, no. 338, p. 206 et 424), lui préférant la conception spinoziste. Dans une lettre datée du 19-08-1740 à Mirabeau (le père du grand tribun), Vauvenargues écrit que Boulainviller est un auteur qui le "touche extrêmement" (G.II, p. 221). Nous donnons nos références d'après l'édition de D.L. Gilbert en 2 volumes (Paris, 1857), et indiquées par G.I ou G.II, suivi du numéro de la page et parfois celui du fragment cité. Lorsque le texte auquel nous nous référons est absent de cette édition, notre référence est Vauvenargues, *Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit Humain*, éd. J. Dagen (Paris, 1981). Nous citons Spinoza dans la traduction de Ch. Appuhn en 4 volumes (Paris, 1964-1966), sauf pour le *Traité Politique* pour lequel nous utilisons la traduction de P.-F. Moreau (Paris, 1979). Le texte latin est indiqué dans l'édition de C. Gebhardt en 4 volumes (Heidelberg, 1972).

² "Puissance d'agir et vertu, le spinozisme de Vauvenargues", dans: *Spinoza au XVIII^{ème} siècle*, éd. Olivier Bloch (Paris, 1990), p. 185-198. "Amour de l'être et ambition

Traité sur le Libre Arbitre, suivi d'une *Réponse à quelques objections*, et son *Discours sur la Liberté* (daté de juillet 1737), suivi d'une *Réponse aux conséquences de la nécessité*, développent explicitement en effet une métaphysique d'inspiration spinoziste, de la "puissance d'agir" et de la "nécessité" universelle, qu'il oppose à la conception traditionnelle (cartésienne et théologique) du libre arbitre. Mais ce philosophe de l'affirmation nécessaire de la vie, pour qui la vertu est une *virtù*, c'est-à-dire une énergie, une puissance, une perfection et la jouissance actuelle de son affirmation, ce philosophe qui a écrit—à la manière de la proposition 67 d'*Ethique* IV—qu' "on ne peut juger de la vie par une plus fausse règle que la mort" (G.I no. 140, p. 387) car "la pensée de la mort nous trompe car elle nous fait oublier de vivre" (G.I no. 143, p. 388), Vauvenargues donc (militaire de métier, ayant aspiré—en vain—à un poste de diplomate), s'avère aussi un penseur politique.³ C'est sur ce terrain des "principes" de la politique et de l'histoire, que nous interrogeons aujourd'hui le "spinozisme de Vauvenargues".

Corneille, écrit notre philosophe, s'est "attaché à peindre les hommes tels qu'ils devraient être. Il est donc vrai du moins qu'il ne les a pas peints tels qu'ils étaient" (G.I, p. 244). Et le jugement porté sur "l'erreur de Corneille" vaut pour tous ces "orateurs" et ces "faux philosophes" (G.I, p. 67) qui veulent "accommoder les hommes à leurs idées, au lieu de former leurs idées sur les hommes" (G.I, p. 244). Les "politiques" au contraire, appuyés sur l'expérience du monde⁴ et la pratique du pouvoir, "connaissent mieux les hommes que ceux qui font métier de la philosophie: je veux dire, poursuit Vauvenargues, qu'ils sont plus vrais philosophes" (*Réflexions et Maximes*, G.I no. 406, p. 437).

Cette opposition brutale des "faux philosophes", philosophes de métier enfermés dans leur cabinet et leur idéalisme, et des "politiques" plus véritablement philosophes car nourris du réel et de la connaissance pratique des hommes, nous rappelle avec évidence l'attaque du *Traité Politique*.⁵ En lisant Vauvenargues nous avons

de gloire: le spinozisme de Vauvenargues", *Cahiers philosophiques* 51 (1992) et *Philosophy and Theology* (Marquette University Quarterly) 5-3 (1991).

³ "La politique est la plus grande de toutes les sciences" (G.I no. 405, p. 437).

⁴ Ce que Vauvenargues nomme la "familiarité" (G.I no. 17, p. 77; no. 4, p. 117; no. 47, p. 378; G.II, p. 200-201). C'est l'expérience du monde chère à Machiavel.

⁵ Dans le paragraphe 1 du premier chapitre du *TP*, Spinoza reproche aux "philosophes", 1) de se représenter les hommes "non pas tels qu'ils sont mais tels

souvent l'impression de retrouver ce début du *TP* (ou encore la préface de la troisième partie de l'*Ethique*). Ainsi la Réflexion 296 affirme:

J'ai toujours trouvé ridicule que les philosophes aient fait une vertu incompatible avec la nature de l'homme, et qu'après l'avoir ainsi feinte, ils aient prononcé froidement qu'il n'y avait aucune vertu. Qu'ils parlent du fantôme de leur invention; ils peuvent à leur gré l'abandonner ou le détruire puisqu'ils l'ont créé" (G.I, p. 416-417). Ou encore: "Tout ce que la nature a fait est à sa place tel qu'il doit l'être et il est aussi sot d'en rire que d'en pleurer (G.I, p. 314).⁶

Les expressions, comme les adversaires de Vauvenargues et de Spinoza, sont les mêmes. Ce sont ceux qui croient au finalisme universel⁷ et en un libre arbitre que nous posséderions "pour" choisir librement le bien, sur son modèle transcendant, mais qui nous rend également capable d'adhérer volontairement au mal, c'est-à-dire aux passions dans lesquelles nous tomberions alors par notre "propre faute". C'est au contraire sur une théorie des passions, comprises dans les lois de la nature (théorie libérée du libre arbitre et du dualisme moral de l'âme et du corps) et sur la base d'une métaphysique de la nécessité et de l'affirmation immanente de la puissance, que Vauvenargues va esquisser de manière cohérente, bien que sous forme de fragments dispersés dans l'ensemble de l'oeuvre, une conception originale de la politique et de l'histoire qui s'inscrit logiquement dans le "système" que forme sa philosophie et, de manière implicite, dans une filiation qui est bien celle de Machiavel et de Spinoza.⁸

qu'eux-mêmes désireraient les voir"; 2) de "louer sur tous les tons une nature humaine qui n'existe nulle part"; 3) de juger en fonction de ce modèle idéal, des perversions des hommes en proie aux "passions"; 4) enfin, l'habitude de ces "philosophes" de "railler" nos passions, "de les déplorer, de les traquer ou (quand ils font profession de sainteté) de les maudire" (éd. Gebhardt III, p. 273).

⁶ Cf. aussi G.I no. 219, p. 399; no. 3, p. 67; *Discours sur le caractère des différents siècles*, G.I, p. 162.

⁷ *Sur la Providence*, G.I, p. 218; *Sur l'économie de l'univers*, G.I, p. 218.

⁸ Dans son *Plan d'un livre de philosophie*, Vauvenargues dit l'utilité d'un "système général de toutes les vérités essentielles que l'on peut connaître sur les sciences" et il émet, dans ce cadre, le projet de fixer "nos opinions sur le gouvernement dont les hommes disputent depuis si longtemps sans pouvoir s'accorder" (G.II, p. 73). Ce n'est donc ni en *moraliste* qui juge de ce qui est par ce qui devrait être, ni en *théologien* qui, à la lumière surnaturelle de la révélation, sait faire luire à notre étonnement "la beauté, la grandeur et la magnificence de (l')ordre des choses" (*Sur l'économie de l'univers*, G.I, p. 218), mais en *philosophe* qui s'efforce seulement de connaître, libre de toute admiration, l' "ordre immuable et nécessaire de la nature" (*ibid.*), que

Comme Spinoza en effet, dans le chapitre XVI du *TTP* (ou le ch. II, para. 2 & 3 du *TP*), c'est tout d'abord sur la puissance de Dieu ou de la nature dans sa pleine présence, que Vauvenargues peut poser un droit de nature qui s'étend aussi loin que s'étendent les forces de chacun. La force, toujours en liaison avec une ou d'autres forces, leurs rapports d'alliances ou d'antagonismes, tels sont les principes de cette science de la politique qui, comme toute science, s'est donné pour projet de "comprendre les premières lois du monde" (*Sur l'étude des sciences*, G.I, p. 113). Or, le droit de nature n'est pas autre chose, chez Vauvenargues comme chez Spinoza, que "les lois mêmes de la nature".⁹ C'est la position d'un *conatus* nommé ici "amour de l'être ou de la perfection de l'être [...] que nous voudrions toujours augmenter" (*Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit Humain*, G.I, p. 28), qui s'identifie à notre essence singulière c'est-à-dire aux lois mêmes de la production de notre être.¹⁰

Cette philosophie de l'affirmation multiple des forces est immédiatement aussi et nécessairement une pensée agonistique:¹¹ "Les hommes sont ennemis-nés les uns des autres, non à cause qu'ils se haïssent, mais parce qu'ils ne peuvent s'agrandir sans se traverser" écrit Vauvenargues (G.I no. 905, p. 490).

On pense à l'axiome mathématique sanglant de la partie IV de l'*Ethique* et à la guerre totale dont tous les modes finis sont inévi-

Vauvenargues mène son enquête dans le domaine de la politique et de l'histoire. Notons que, comme chez Spinoza, l'admiration est ici l'expression de l'ignorance et de la faiblesse: cf. *Court Traité*, II, ch. II, 2 et ch. III, 2 note 1; *Ethique* III, déf. des Affects 4; *TTP* XVII, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 206; éd. Appuhn II, p. 283. Le principe machiavélien auquel Spinoza comme Vauvenargues souhaitent se tenir: suivre la vérité effective de la chose plutôt que son imagination (*Le prince*, ch. XV).

⁹ Suivant l'expression de *TP* II, 4; la même idée est exprimée par Vauvenargues à propos des "abus inévitables" qui, dit-il, "sont des lois de la nature" (G.I no. 26, p. 376).

¹⁰ "Les lois de la création ne nous sont point étrangères: elles constituent notre être, elles forment notre essence, elles sont entièrement nôtres et nous pouvons dire hardiment que nous agissons par nous-même quand nous n'agissons que par elles" (*Traité sur le Libre arbitre*, G.I, p. 205). Cet effort universel est reconnu dans l' "instinct qui nous porte à nous agrandir" (*Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit Humain*, G.I, p. 32), "qui nous sollicite d'accroître, d'étayer, d'affermir notre être" (*ibid.*, p. 36) et cela indéfiniment (G.I, p. 93) car cet accroissement nous procure du plaisir (*ibid.*, p. 37; nous indiquerons dans la suite de notre article, *Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit Humain* par ICEH).

¹¹ Comme chez Spinoza, l'affirmation des existences est immédiatement corrélative de leurs limitations réciproques, comme cela est indiqué dès la seconde définition d'*Ethique* I.

tablement les victimes.¹² Sur fond d'antagonisme universel, le modèle de la guerre sert ainsi à Vauvenargues d'approche de la question politique. Ce qui le conduit à définir "la politique" en son sens pratique et stratégique, soit par la connaissance des forces en présence et de leurs "intérêts réciproques" (*ICEH*, G.I, p. 3). Avec le rapport des forces entre elles, et les intérêts qu'elles expriment, nous avons ainsi les deux principes majeurs de la philosophie politique vauvenarguienne.

La perspective qui, du rapport des forces et des intérêts entre les Etats, et la domination d'un prince sur un autre, va nous conduire à la question de la domination politique au sein d'une même société, est proprement machiavélienne et spinoziste.¹³ On ne s'étonnera donc pas non plus, que ce soit selon la perspective hobbenne de la "guerre de tous contre tous"¹⁴ que Vauvenargues présente sa propre

¹² "Il n'est donné dans la Nature aucune chose singulière qu'il n'en soit donné une autre plus puissante et plus forte. Mais, si une chose quelconque est donnée, une autre plus puissante, par laquelle la première peut être détruite, est donnée" (*Ethique* IV, axiome). Cf. aussi *TP* VIII, 12: les hommes "sont par nature ennemis...". Vauvenargues écrit que "tout s'exécute dans l'univers par la violence", "et la même règle est suivie par les animaux et les êtres inanimés" (G.I no. 187, p. 393). Quant aux hommes, lorsqu'ils ne se font pas ouvertement violence, ils suivent encore, il est vrai "en observant religieusement les bienséances [...] les lois de la guerre tacite qu'ils se font" continuellement (G.I no. 905, p. 490). Guerre tacite aussi, ou déclarée, entre les Etats. C'est ainsi que les traités n'expriment au mieux qu'un équilibre fragile des forces à un moment donné, chacun des contractants se proposant formellement, suivant son intérêt, de "violenter" l'accord "dès qu'il en aurait le pouvoir" (G.I no. 574, p. 454); "Nul traité qui ne soit comme un monument de la mauvaise foi des souverains" (*ibid.*, no. 573, p. 454); car entre les nations ne règne que l'intérêt égoïste que, par la ruse, le mensonge ou la force, chacun s'efforce de faire valoir. Mais, "tous les hommes (étant) clairvoyants sur leurs intérêts [...] il n'arrive guère qu'on les en détache par la ruse [...]". Les traités les mieux ménagés ne sont que la loi du plus fort" (*ibid.*, no. 309, p. 419).

¹³ Chez Spinoza, d'une part, les rapports entre Etats sont ceux des êtres à l'état de nature, (*TP* III, 9, 11, 13) et leurs rapports d'alliances ou de paix ne subsistent qu'à condition que les causes qui les ont nouées (la crainte d'un dommage ou l'espoir d'un profit), elles-mêmes demeurent (*TP* III, 14): d'autre part, au sein de la cité, le souverain n'a de droit sur ses sujets "que dans la mesure où, par la puissance, il l'emporte sur eux; c'est la continuation de l'état de nature" (Lettre 50 à Jarig Jelles, éd. Appuhn IV, p. 283; éd. Gebhardt IV, p. 238-239); cf. aussi, sur la force du pacte lié à l'utilité, *TTP* XVI, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 192, 196-197, éd. Appuhn II, p. 265, 269-270.

¹⁴ Hobbes, *Le Citoyen*, section I ch.1, 13 (éd. S. Sorbière 1649; rééd. 1787). Comme le souligne Jean Ehrard, c'est contre ce modèle honni de la guerre naturelle entre les hommes et plus encore contre l'identification spinoziste du droit et de la force, que le demi-siècle tout entier s'élève: *L'idée de nature en France dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1963; rééd. 1994), p. 478 et suiv.

conception de l'état de nature.¹⁵ Ce qui différencie cependant Vauvenargues de Hobbes c'est que, dans l'état de nature, c'est déjà à l'intérieur d'un corps collectif, un "peuple", que vivent les sauvages et que ces peuples, même "impies", ont déjà leurs habitudes et leurs "coutumes". Le rapport naturel entre les hommes ne peut donc pas s'interpréter *seulement* sur le mode du conflit même si celui-ci est inhérent à la condition existentielle des êtres dans leur affirmation. C'est symptomatiquement, qu'à La Rochefoucauld qui souligne l'antagonisme essentiel entre "tous" les humains,¹⁶ Vauvenargues répond que par "intérêt" ou "ressemblance" les hommes sont toujours nécessairement conduits à former un corps social aussi embryonnaire et instable soit-il (G.II, p. 83). Ainsi ne faudra-t-il lire la description de l'état de nature comme état de guerre, que comme un des deux aspects de la fluctuation permanente du tissu social primitif qui se noue et se dénoue au gré de la logique imitative des affects et des intérêts: les passions comme les intérêts expliquant aussi bien la concorde que les carnages.¹⁷

De la description de l'état de nature nous retiendrons aussi que le droit de nature des barbares est beaucoup plus théorique que réel. C'est sur l'impuissance et la dépendance de ces hommes que Vauvenargues, comme Spinoza (*TP* II, 15), insiste. L'égalité et la liberté que certains croient naturelles sont aussi imaginaires que les

¹⁵ Les "peuples sauvages qui vivaient sans lois et sans maîtres ne connaissaient d'autre droit que la force, d'autres dieux que l'impunité; monstres qui erraient dans les bois avec les ours et se détruisaient les uns les autres par d'affreux carnages; égaux par le crime, par la pauvreté, par l'ignorance, par la cruauté. Nul appui parmi eux pour l'innocence, nulle récompense pour la vertu, nul frein pour l'audace. L'art du labourage négligé ou ignoré par les barbares, qui ne subsistaient que de rapines, accoutumés à une vie oisive et vagabonde; la terre stérile pour ses habitants; la raison impuissante et inutile; tel était l'état de ces peuples, telles étaient leurs coutumes impies" (*Discours sur l'inégalité des richesses*, G.I, p. 172-173). Description à l'opposé de ce que pouvait écrire au début du siècle La Hontan sur la vie douce et innocente des Hurons: *Dialogues curieux entre l'auteur et un sauvage de bon sens qui a voyagé et Mémoires de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Amsterdam, 1704).

¹⁶ La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, éd. Jacques Truchet (Paris, 1983), no. 268, p. 69.

¹⁷ Vauvenargues ne fait guère confiance aux témoignages des historiens ou des voyageurs: "les histoires des peuples barbares me sont également suspectes dans leurs reproches et dans leurs éloges et je ne veux rien établir sur des fondements si ruineux. Mais, à ne consulter que la seule raison, et ce que nous savons par expérience, est-il probable que la condition des hommes ait été si différente que nous le croyons, selon les divers usages et les divers temps?" (*Discours sur le caractère des différents siècles*, G. I, p. 161 note 1, Autre Variante). Sur l'immutabilité de la condition humaine, à rapprocher de Machiavel, *Discours sur la première décade de Tite-Live*, éd. T. Guiraudet (Paris, 1985), Livre II, Avant-propos, p. 154.

modèles de vertu des “orateurs”, des “faux philosophes” ou des “théologiens”. Si l’on veut parler en vérité d’une égalité naturelle, c’est de celle de la misère et de l’insécurité communes dont il faut parler; quant à la liberté naturelle, la voilà réduite à l’errance malheureuse des désirs et des besoins. Cette position est aussi bien anti-hobbiennne qu’anti-lockienne.¹⁸ Elle s’affirme au contraire d’autant plus proche de Spinoza que Vauvenargues, lorsqu’il s’agira d’expliquer les causes du passage à la société civile, ne fera à aucun moment référence ni au rôle de la “loi naturelle”¹⁹ ni à la perspective artificialiste et volontariste du contrat. On trouve d’ailleurs chez Vauvenargues comme chez Spinoza (sur la base commune d’une théorie des passions) deux types d’explication de l’existence de fait de la société civile qui, dans la genèse de l’Etat, n’attribue à la raison en tant que telle, aucune place majeure.²⁰ La première insistant plus

¹⁸ On peut dire très schématiquement en effet que, chacun à sa manière, Hobbes comme Locke, défendent l’idée d’une égalité et d’une liberté naturelles. Chez Hobbes, cette égalité et cette liberté est celle même du *jus naturale* (*endeavour* ou *conatus*) qui permet à chacun, non seulement “d’user de ses facultés naturelles” afin de “conserver, autant qu’il peut, ses membres et sa vie”, mais aussi, au cœur même de l’état de nature, de découvrir par le calcul de la raison, la “loi naturelle” qui l’inclinera volontairement à la concorde et à la paix, c’est-à-dire, au contrat. Pour Locke, l’égalité et la liberté naturelles se définissent par rapport à la loi naturelle qui est celle de Dieu et de la Raison qui gouverne l’homme. Contrairement à Hobbes (et Spinoza) le droit naturel a déjà ici le sens d’un véritable droit (juridique et moral) c’est-à-dire d’une *norme* de justice, ce que refuse Vauvenargues, tout en refusant aussi l’idée de la liberté et de l’égalité hobbiennes des *conatus* (qu’il a pu découvrir en lisant *Le Citoyen*, dans la traduction de S. Sorbière (Amsterdam, 1649)).

¹⁹ Montaigne, dans son dialogue avec Charron, que Vauvenargues suscite, fait bien référence aux “lois de l’équité naturelle” (et c’est la seule allusion—indirecte—à la loi naturelle dans toute l’œuvre de Vauvenargues; et c’est bien à Montaigne et non au philosophe aixois qu’il faut l’attribuer, cf. *Essais*, II, 12, p. 580 de l’éd. Villey-Saulnier (Paris, rééd. 1978)), mais c’est pour souligner combien leur sont “très peu conformes” les lois faites par les hommes, dont il souligne au contraire qu’elles sont “arbitraires”, fondées sur leur “caprice” ou “imposées” par la violence (dialogue no. 6 entre *Montaigne et Charron*, G.II, p. 22). Par son refus de la loi naturelle, le philosophe aixois est en rupture radicale avec tous les théoriciens de son temps qui, aussi bien conservateurs que libéraux, s’accordent sur l’existence de cette loi pour rejeter l’identification insupportable du droit et de la force qu’ils lisent aussi bien chez Hobbes que chez Spinoza. Cf. particulièrement Pufendorf, *Le Droit de la Nature et des Gens*, éd. Barbeyrac (1706), livre II, ch. I, p. 136 ou Burlamaqui dont les *Principes du Droit Naturel* sont édités en 1747; mais déjà aussi Bossuet, Montesquieu, d’Argens...

²⁰ Dans le *TP* XVI, c’est dans le contexte du jeu de la contrainte et des rapports de forces qu’il faut comprendre l’action de la raison tandis que, le *TP* (VI, 1) affirme de manière plus radicale encore que “si la multitude s’accorde naturellement et accepte d’être conduite comme par un seul esprit, elle ne le fait pas sous la conduite

particulièrement sur la faiblesse, l'imperfection, les besoins, la misère, l'espoir et surtout la crainte qui forcent les hommes à se rassembler²¹ pour s'accorder sur un "bien commun" (*ICEH*, G.I, p. 50); la seconde met au principe de la socialité, la logique même de l'ambition de gloire (et des passions qu'elle implique), sur la base des lois de l'imitation des affects, tels qu'on peut les lire dans la partie III de l'*Ethique*.

Nous avons là, avec ce qu'on peut appeler le *conatus* mimétique, un troisième principe constitutif de l'éthique, de la politique et de l'histoire, commun à Vauvenargues et Spinoza. Vauvenargues écrit dans cette perspective, que la gloire: "cette forte et noble passion, cette source ancienne et féconde des vertus humaines [...], a fait sortir le monde de la barbarie et porté les arts à leur perfection" (*Discours sur la Gloire*, G.I, p. 128).

Par la dynamique des passions, chez Vauvenargues comme chez Spinoza, la nature se fait "histoire".²² Selon la logique même des affects et des intérêts contradictoires qu'ils suscitent, les mêmes lois (constitutives de socialité, de vertu et de grandeur) se révèlent être aussi des puissances de fluctuations, de destruction et de décadence.²³ La logique des passions est en effet à la racine de l'inégalité sociale et de cet antagonisme entre les "conditions" dans lequel Vauvenargues décèle le conflit dynamique majeur qui explique à la fois la naissance de l'Etat et de l'histoire elle-même. Vauvenargues suppose en effet que l'instauration consensuelle de la paix sous la contrainte de la nécessité, a eu pour effet la disparition d'une "égali-

de la raison, mais par la force de quelque passion commune (cf. III, 9): espérance, crainte, ou désir de tirer vengeance d'un dommage subi en commun". Vauvenargues développe aussi l'idée selon laquelle le "sentiment" a toujours précédé la raison, voire a servi à sa constitution; cf. *Discours sur l'inégalité des richesses*, G.I, p. 173 et *Réflexions et Maximes*, no. 151, 153-154-155, 312 (G.I, p. 389-390 et 419).

²¹ *ICEH*, G.I, p. 50-51, et *Réflexions et Maximes*, no. 184, 188, 590, 662 et 707; G.I, p. 392-393, 456, 465-466 et 473.

²² Vauvenargues souligne la puissance civilisatrice des passions en G.I, p. 132, 134, 136-137 et dans les *Réflexions et Maximes*, no. 149 à 155 (G.I, p. 389-390). Sur la dynamique de l'ambition de gloire et la constitution de la socialité chez Vauvenargues dans ses rapports au spinozisme, cf. notre étude "Amour de l'être et ambition de gloire", p. 55 et suiv.

²³ La logique de la gloire enveloppe une loi de démesure et de déséquilibre. En effet, lorsque les hommes "atteignent le but dans quelque art ou quelque science, on doit s'attendre qu'ils le passeront pour acquérir un nouvelle gloire. Et c'est ce qui fait en partie que les plus beaux siècles dégénèrent si promptement, et qu'à peine sortis de la barbarie ils y replongent" (G.I, no. 220, p. 400).

té primitive qui n'était fondée que sur (la) pauvreté et (l') ignorance communes" (G.I, p. 173). C'est alors nécessairement, selon la loi même des affects (sous la protection du consensus de paix et l'identification de principe de "l'intérêt particulier dans l'intérêt général" (G.I, p. 50)) que le "génie", l' "activité", la "prudence" des uns, vont naturellement s'élever au-dessus de l' "incapacité", de la "paresse" et de la "témérité" des autres (G.I, p. 172). Le libre exercice des forces, des passions et des vertus qu'elles expriment, engendre ainsi l'inégalité des conditions et des richesses. C'est de manière lapidaire que Vauvenargues constatera simplement dans sa préface du livre III de l'*ICEH* (intitulée *Du bien et du Mal moral*) que "le bien commun exige de grands sacrifices, et qu'il ne peut se répandre également sur tous les hommes" (G.I, p. 50).²⁴ La cupidité insatiable des puissants, la jalousie et l'envie des défavorisés, vont être alors les ferments d'une nouvelle guerre, que ni la moralité, ni la religion, ne peuvent freiner.²⁵ D'où la naissance de l'Etat. En effet: "Ces motifs respectables

²⁴ Cette constatation, qui touche aux pouvoirs ambivalents de la politique (cf. aussi les *Réflexions* 301, 410-411; G.I, p. 418 et 437, et le texte *Sur le luxe* en G.II, p. 67) ne saurait en aucun cas être une légitimation de la misère économique des peuples. Vauvenargues est au contraire l'un des rares penseurs de son temps, avec le curé Meslier, à être profondément révolté par la misère, mais aussi par les justifications idéologiques que certains y trouvent (J.F. Melon, dans son *Essai politique sur le commerce*—1734, nouvelle éd. 1736—s'efforce par exemple de démontrer que les pauvres sont coupables de l'être...; cité par Ehrard, *L'idée de nature en France*, p. 531; chez le même auteur cf. les remarques sur la pensée du curé Meslier p. 520 et suiv.). Dans son *Discours sur l'inégalité des richesses*, Vauvenargues évoque le scandale des impies face à l'inégalité des fortunes (G.I, p. 171). Lorsque—comme il le recommande dans sa *Réflexion* no. 340—on sait ne pas s'arrêter au sens des paroles mais percevoir celui de l'auteur, c'est sa propre indignation qu'on doit lire dans la révolte des impies. Dans le *Discours sur le caractère des différents siècles* (G.I, p. 158) il rapproche brutalement, en effet, les horreurs de la barbarie des sacrifices humains des anciens, avec le sacrifice de ses misérables que perpétue "tranquillement" la société civilisée: "Cela paraît-il moins féroce? et lequel mérite le mieux le nom de barbarie, d'un sacrifice impie fait par ignorance, ou d'une inhumanité commise de sang-froid, et avec une entière connaissance?" Cf. aussi dans son *Essai sur quelques Caractères, Thyeste* (G.I, p. 307), *Varus* (p. 322), *Les Bas-Fonds* (p. 349); et aussi *Sur les misères cachées* (p. 97), *Sur la liberté* (p. 79); et dans *Réflexions et Maximes* les no. 25-26, 200, 387-388-389, 392 à 395, 794 (G.I, p. 433 à 435 et 480). On peut penser qu'une politique vraiment "humaine" serait celle capable de supprimer la misère, même si l'inégalité des conditions semble à Vauvenargues, insurmontable (G.I no. 551, p. 451).

²⁵ La moralité, c'est-à-dire "les devoirs des hommes rassemblés en société" (*ICEH*, G.I, p. 3) est définie par le "bien commun" (*ibid.*, p. 50); la religion, "répare le vice des choses humaines (et) assure des indemnités dignes d'envie à ceux qui nous semblent lésés" (*ibid.*, p. 50). Remarquons, d'une part, que la religion est définie par sa fonction psycho-sociale de compensation de la misère de l'inégalité, d'autre part, qu'elle est cependant impuissante, par elle-même, à exercer cette fonction

n'étant pas assez puissants pour donner un frein à la cupidité des hommes, il a fallu encore qu'ils convinssent de certaines règles pour le bien public, fondé à la honte du genre humain sur la crainte odieuse des supplices; et c'est l'origine des lois" (G.I, p. 50-51).

Ce "ils" de "ils convinssent" (qui est la seule allusion de Vauvenargues à une problématique du contrat), fait naturellement problème. Qui sont les hommes qui vont convenir sur les règles définissant et régissant le bien public ainsi que sur le pouvoir qui les fera respecter? Vauvenargues n'en dit rien. Mais la suite du texte qui indique la fonction propre des lois est éclairante: "Dans cette impuissance absolue d'empêcher l'inégalité des conditions, [les lois] fixent les droits de chacune, elles les protègent" (G.I, p. 51).²⁶

Comment dire plus clairement que les règles du "bien commun" et de l'"intérêt général", soit les institutions mêmes de l'Etat, ne font que légaliser dans la sphère juridico-politique, les rapports de forces et l'ordre social inégalitaire qui s'est constitué en dehors d'elles? Les lois, comme l'Etat, sont donc de fait une invention des plus forts, c'est-à-dire des plus riches, afin d'assurer, dans la durée, leur domination et leurs richesses. Si le "ils" de "ils convinssent" peut, en théorie, être attribué à tous les membres de la société, il est évident cependant que ce consensus démocratique sur l'ordre établi, n'a pu être de *fait* qu'obtenu par la force des uns face à la faiblesse des autres. L'ensemble de la réflexion de Vauvenargues souligne ainsi "l'impuissance absolue" des lois face à la réalité du rapport des forces sociales et la puissance absolue et souveraine de la force qui fait le droit et impose le consensus chaque jour répété de l'obéissance.²⁷ Le consensus qui masque la contradiction fondamentale des

d'apaisement des conflits et des esprits, et qu'elle ne pourra de fait assurer celle-ci que dans le cadre de l'Etat (ses lois, ses menaces). On pense bien sûr à Machiavel (par exemple *Discours*, Livre I ch. XII, éd. Guiraudet, p. 66), et à ce que dit Spinoza au début du *TPI*, 5.

²⁶ Cf. aussi Spinoza, *TTP* V, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 73-74; éd. Appuhn II, p. 106 et *TTP* XVI, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 193; éd. Appuhn II, p. 266.

²⁷ "Les lois, à elles seules, sont par elles-mêmes sans force...", (*TP* VIII, 19) et elles "n'obligent pas celui qui est maître de l'Etat" (*TP* IV, 6). D'autre part, parce que les lois et le pouvoir qui les soutient assurent avec la "sûreté" de notre existence et de nos "possessions", la "tranquillité" de nos vies (c'est la finalité même du contrat), parce que nous jouissons dès notre naissance, et à chaque instant, des bienfaits de ces lois, parce que "quiconque prétend se soustraire à cette autorité dont il tient tout, ne peut trouver injuste qu'elle lui ravisse tout jusqu'à la vie" (*ICEH*, G.I, p. 51), par intérêt donc ou par crainte des supplices, "nous nous engageons toujours à elles (les lois) par des liens plus forts" (*ibid.*). Comme Spinoza, Vauvenargues pourrait écrire

conditions est donc—de gré ou de force—continué et constitutif. La souveraineté de l'Etat (son "autorité") est ainsi *absolue de fait*, même s'il faut distinguer (ce que fait implicitement le philosophe) entre les possesseurs de cette autorité (ceux qui ont convenu et continuent à convenir par leur obéissance, des lois et du pouvoir) et les "dépositaires de l'autorité" (G.I, p. 51) qui, historiquement, peuvent être aussi bien des assemblées, comme au temps de la République romaine, qu'un seul homme comme dans la Monarchie française.

Contrairement aux apparences, l'inégalité comme la propriété, bien que *faits de nature*, ne sont donc pas fondées en nature. L'Etat, dans son historicité, est "le seul titre" de nos avantages et de nos possessions (G.I, p. 51). Il n'y a, en ce sens de droit que positif. C'est ainsi qu'on peut *historiquement* supposer, comme le fait Vauvenargues, "toutes les conditions égales" (G.I, p. 51), même si, *premièrement*, "la nature n'a rien fait d'égal" (G.I, no. 227, p. 401) et si *deuxièmement*, "la Loi ne saurait égaler les hommes malgré la Nature" (réflexion no. 713, dans l'éd. Dagen, p. 353). En effet si ce n'est pas par la spontanéité de la nature ou par un décret de loi que les conditions peuvent être égalées, ne reste alors qu'une seule solution: l'égalité entre les conditions n'a pu être qu'imposée de force, donc par une loi de nature, par les plus faibles rassemblés face aux puissants.²⁸ En l'absence de loi naturelle, la Justice—qui n'existe pas en dehors de l'Etat comme l'ont déjà affirmé fortement aussi bien Hobbes que Spinoza—réglemente alors, tout en s'y soumettant, les rapports de forces entre les conditions: "Dans l'une et l'autre supposition (l'égalité des conditions ou leur inégalité), l'équité consiste à maintenir invariablement leurs droits réciproques, et c'est là tout l'objet des lois" (G.I, p. 51-52). Et le pouvoir de l'Etat qui, dans les deux cas, n'exprime que l'état des forces en présence, est lui-même la force qui fait respecter cette "justice" dans l'égalité ou l'inégalité des classes.

Cette primauté radicale de la force sur la loi—très insolite parmi les penseurs nomophiles du XVIII^e siècle—est sans aucun doute un

que "c'est l'obéissance qui fait le sujet" (*TTP* XVII, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 202; éd. Appuhn II, p. 278), comme elle fait, dans un même geste consensuel, exister la loi et le pouvoir qui l'exigent.

²⁸ "La politique fait entre les princes ce que les tribunaux de la justice font entre les particuliers: plusieurs faibles, ligés contre un puissant, lui imposent la nécessité de modérer son ambition et ses violences", *Réflexions et maximes*, G.I no. 901, p. 489.

héritage machiavélien et spinoziste. L'Etat social et politique est bien la continuation de l'état de nature.²⁹

Entre rois, entre peuples, entre particuliers, écrit Vauvenargues, le plus fort se donne des droits sur le plus faible, et la même règle est suivie par les animaux et les êtres inanimés; de sorte que tout s'exécute dans l'univers par la violence. Et cet ordre que nous blâmons avec quelque apparence de justice, est la loi la plus générale, la plus immuable et la plus ancienne de la nature (G.I no. 187, p. 393).

A la "loi naturelle", norme transcendante de l'équité ("apparence de justice" dit Vauvenargues!) qui nous permettrait de "blâmer" la nature telle qu'elle existe, le philosophe oppose donc—comme le politique—la puissance de fait comme droit, qui est la seule vraie loi de la nature en son "ordre immuable et nécessaire". Ainsi Vauvenargues ne se fait-il aucune illusion sur le fondement historico-moral de la légitimité de la noblesse à perpétuer la mémoire d'une vertu dont il fait pourtant l'éloge:

La possession, écrit-il, est le seul titre des choses humaines; les traités et les bornes des Etats, la fortune des particuliers et la dignité royale elle-même, tout est fondé là-dessus. Qui voudrait remonter aux commencements, ne trouverait presque rien qui ne fût matière à contestation: la possession est donc le plus respectable de tous les titres, puisqu'elle nous donne la paix (G.I no. 365, p. 429).³⁰

Le poids du temps est donc lui-même une puissance, un droit actuel, puisqu'il force le respect et la soumission. La loi certes, légitime après coup le titre de la possession (*ICEH*, G.I, p. 51), mais c'est le

²⁹ "Vous me demandez quelle différence il y a entre Hobbes et moi quant à la politique: cette différence consiste en ce que je maintiens toujours le droit naturel et que je n'accorde dans une cité quelconque de droit au souverain sur les sujets que dans la mesure où, par la puissance, il l'emporte sur eux; c'est la continuation de l'état de nature", Lettre 50 à Jarig Jelles du 2-06-1674, éd. Gebhardt IV, p. 238-239; éd. Appuhn IV, p. 283; et *TP* III, 3.

³⁰ Vauvenargues se souvient sans doute de l'attaque de l'abbé Dubos contre la thèse de Boulainviller. Dans son *Etat de la France [...] extrait des mémoires dressées par les intendants du royaume par ordre du roi Louis XVI avec des mémoires historiques sur l'ancien gouvernement de cette monarchie jusqu'à Hugues Capet* (Londres, 1727; rééd. 1737), Boulainviller défendait la thèse d'une royauté élective—sur la base des lois fondamentales—introduite par les Francs vainqueurs des Gallo-Romains. L'abbé Dubos répondra à cet écrit, dans son *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules* (Paris, 1734), par une conception absolutiste de l'instauration de la monarchie franque (les rois francs inscrivant leur légitimité dans la lignée des empereurs romains). En marge de la problématique du fondement que suppose un tel débat, Vauvenargues adopte pour sa part le point de vue, non de l'origine, mais du temps, de la "force des choses", des habitudes, des passions, des coutumes.

fait de la possession, c'est-à-dire la puissance d'appropriation en acte, qui est en réalité "le seul titre des choses humaines", c'est-à-dire le seul droit comme puissance. C'est ce qu'affirme fortement Vauvenargues en soulignant "l'invincible pouvoir de la coutume" (G.I, p. 10). On retrouve, avec la force de la "longue possession", et par là même du temps et de la coutume, les fondements pratiques de la légitimité, telle que la pensait Machiavel pour les Etats héréditaires.³¹ Puissance historique de fait—le *conatus* est aussi un *habitus*—que reconnaissait Spinoza dans la très grande difficulté pour un peuple de changer la forme de son gouvernement.³² La longue possession est aussi, reconnaît Vauvenargues, un facteur de paix. Mais c'est lui-même qui nous indique combien:

ce que nous honorons du nom de paix n'est proprement qu'une courte trêve par laquelle le plus faible renonce à ses prétentions, justes ou injustes, jusqu'à ce qu'il trouve l'occasion de les faire valoir à main armée (G.I no. 413, p. 438).

Certes, la trêve qu'impose certaines possessions peut être assez longue pour légitimer, par le temps et la coutume, son autorité. Mais la loi et la longue possession ne sauraient pourtant masquer et faire oublier—et c'est bien ce que nous rappelle Vauvenargues—*le rapport de guerre latent au coeur de toute société*. Ne dit-il pas que "la servitude abaisse les hommes jusqu'à s'en faire aimer" (G.I no. 22, p. 376)? Belle légitimité alors que celle obtenue par l'accoutumance de la domination et la faiblesse des êtres humains jusqu'à l'amollissement et l'oubli total de la liberté (G.I no. 443, p. 442 et 748, p. 477).

Car si pour Vauvenargues la liberté à l'état de nature n'existe pas, et si les sociétés se sont elles-mêmes constituées sur une autre finalité que la liberté (la sécurité), *le désir de liberté comme "puissance d'agir"* qui s'affirme, écrit-il, dès "le premier soupir de l'enfance" (G.I no. 749, p. 477) est lui, une donnée dynamique intrinsèque de la nature humaine. Cette liberté se confond en effet, avec la nécessité propre de chaque être, son processus singulier d'affirmation et de résistance, son essence même, son *conatus*. Ainsi, lorsque dans un Etat, l'expression de ce désir naturel est totalement étouffée, loin d'honorer la paix qui accompagne cet esclavage, un homme d'âme fière osera affirmer avec Vauvenargues (et bien sûr Spinoza dans le chapitre

³¹ *Le Prince*, ch. II: "Des principautés héréditaires".

³² *TTP* XVIII, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 227-228; éd. Appuhn II, p. 309-310.

XX du *TTP*) que “la guerre n’est pas si onéreuse que la servitude” (G.I, no. 21, p. 376).³³ C’est la position d’un droit de résistance et de révolte qui n’était rien d’autre dans le *TP* (V, 5, 6) que la puissance effective et inaliénable de la multitude à s’opposer à l’oppression. “Droit de guerre” que revendique aussi Vauvenargues à travers le personnage de *Claudius le Séditieux*: “Craindriez-vous de troubler la paix dans la patrie? Quelle paix, qui énerve les coeurs et qui avilit les âmes dans un misérable esclavage! Estimez-vous tant le repos? et la guerre est-elle plus onéreuse que la servitude?” (G.I, p. 346).³⁴

Si “les abus inévitables” des souverains sont eux-mêmes “des lois de la nature” (G.I no. 26, p. 376), c’est la puissance de la nature seule, et non l’impuissance de la loi de la morale ou de la religion, qui pourra y répondre.³⁵ Le philosophe n’a aucun état d’âme face aux bouleversements politiques et au tyrannicide; Brutus est son héros et sans doute est-il un des rares penseurs de son temps à oser louer les mérites de Cromwell. Mais Vauvenargues qui partage la lucidité politique de Spinoza, nous fait aussi comprendre qu’il ne sert à rien de se débarrasser d’un tyran si l’on ne s’attaque pas aux causes mêmes de la tyrannie. Comment donc “attaquer un abus” interroge-t-il? “Il faut voir si on peut ruiner ses fondements” (G.I no. 25, p. 376). Vauvenargues, qui ne s’arrête pas aux dispositions concrètes des institutions, n’en dira pas plus.³⁶ Mais on comprend qu’il n’y a

³³ Cf. aussi lettre 54 à Mirabeau, G.II, p. 182-188.

³⁴ On pense à *TPV*, 4 et à cette paix de l’esclavage qui “mérite plus justement le nom de solitude que celui de corps politique”. Vauvenargues n’en appelle pas pour autant comme Locke (ou par exemple son contemporain le marquis d’Argens dans *Lettres juives* (La Haye, 1736-1737), t.III, lettre 98 p. 166), à un droit moral de désobéissance face à la tyrannie: “S’il n’y avait de domination légitime que celle qui s’exerce avec justice, nous ne devrions rien aux mauvais rois” (G.I no. 709, p. 473). Usbek, résumant Locke, ne disait pas autre chose dans la lettre 104 des *Lettres persanes* de Montesquieu (1721). Mais, comme nous l’avons vu, ce n’est pas là la position théorique de Vauvenargues. Car la légitimité se fonde sur tout autre chose qu’une injustice naturelle ou un contrat auxquels le souverain aurait le devoir de se tenir. L’ouvrage de Locke, *Du gouvernement civil où l’on traite de l’origine, des fondements, de la nature, du pouvoir et des fins des sociétés politiques*, est traduit en français par D. Mazel en 1691 (rééd. 1724). J. Barbeyrac, traducteur de Grotius et de Pufendorf, contribue largement à la diffusion de la pensée politique lockienne dans les notes de ses traductions; cf. particulièrement la note 1 du livre I ch. VIII, 8 du *Droit de la guerre et de la Paix* de Grotius (1724), ou la note 2 du livre VII ch. VIII, 10 du *Droit de la Nature et des Gens* de Pufendorf (1706).

³⁵ Spinoza: “si le roi peut être privé de la puissance par laquelle il domine, c’est en vertu du droit de guerre et non du droit de la société civile: à la violence du roi les sujets ne peuvent résister (*repellere*) que par la violence” (*TP* VII, 30).

³⁶ Cf. *Plan d’un livre de philosophie* qui projetait une étude approfondie du “gouvernement” (G.II, p. 73).

de solution politique durable qu'appuyée sur la puissance d'agir sous ses différentes formes, "car la séduction et l'artifice ne méritent pas moins ce nom que la violence déclarée et manifeste" (G.I, p. 345).³⁷ Cet artifice, peut être bien sûr, celui de la loi. S'il est vrai que "Nulle loi n'est capable d'empêcher un tyran d'abuser de l'autorité de son emploi" (G.I no. 228, p. 401), lorsque la loi s'appuie sur la puissance d'une large partie de la nation, capable de l'imposer et de la défendre, elle exprime par là même aussi une force, un droit, réellement capables d'empêcher les abus des détenteurs de l'autorité.³⁸ Vauvenargues a cependant beaucoup de défiance envers la généralité de la loi qui, sous couvert de moralité, au nom de la vertu ou de la raison, écrase la *diversité naturelle* des esprits, des goûts, des talents (G.I, p. 344).³⁹

C'est le mérite d'une *république* que de respecter cette diversité sur

³⁷ Il faudrait examiner ici la puissance politique que Vauvenargues attribue à l'*éloquence* et par là même à la fonction historique de l'imagination. Si l'éloquence et l'imagination sont des liens nécessaires et dynamiques du grand homme avec son peuple, celles-ci ne sont pas nécessairement pour Vauvenargues—bien au contraire—en dehors de la vérité. C'est par son éloquence que Cicéron a "exécuté de grandes choses pour la république" (G.I no. 357, p. 427); cf. à ce propos Machiavel, *Discours*, livre I, ch. IV, p. 45 et ch. LVIII, p. 156. Cf. aussi parmi les textes retranchés de la première édition (1746) de l'*ICEH*, les réflexions 707 et 708 qui n'ont pas été retenues par D.L. Gilbert et qu'on trouvera p. 352-353 de l'éd. Dagen; et aussi G.I no. 275-276, p. 410-411; *Démosthène et Isocrate*, G.II, p. 16-17.

³⁸ Vauvenargues qui voit en Angleterre un "Etat florissant" (G.II, p. 197) et un "peuple heureux" (G.II p.102), sait que cette "nation" n'est "parvenue à régler le pouvoir des Rois (qu') en leur résistant" (comme l'a écrit Voltaire—son ami qu'il admire tant—dans la lettre VIII, *Sur le Parlement*, des *Lettres philosophiques* (1734), éd. R. Pomeau (Paris, 1964), p. 55).

³⁹ "On hait les tyrans qui exigent un culte extérieur pour leurs personnes ou quelque soumission pour leurs faiblesses; mais sont-ils moins tyrans, ceux qui veulent tenir toutes les passions en captivité, qui contraignent tous les plaisirs et tous les goûts; qui non contents d'opprimer le dehors des hommes veulent encore opprimer l'intérieur, et dominer jusque dans les actions et les pensées les plus secrètes? Y a-t-il, enfin, quelque humanité à prosterner la nature humaine sous un joug si rude?" (*Claudius*, G.I, p. 345). C'est une revendication radicale, face à la généralité uniformisatrice de la loi, de la liberté d'expression du divers. Et Spinoza: "une telle liberté peut avoir ses inconvénients; mais y eut-il jamais aucune institution si sage que nuls inconvénients n'en pussent naître? Vouloir tout régler par les lois, c'est irriter les vices plutôt que les corriger..." *TTP XX*, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 243; éd. Appuhn II, p. 331. Si Vauvenargues accepte l'idée selon laquelle la loi est "la moindre de nos servitudes" (G.I no. 591, p. 456), qu'elle a également permis aux hommes de développer leurs aptitudes, il refuse pourtant, comme Machiavel ou Spinoza, de confondre la loi avec la liberté. Celle-ci, comme puissance d'agir, non seulement se maintient et s'affirme sous l'ordre juridico-politique, mais elle peut aussi s'élever contre lui. Cf. particulièrement la lettre 54 à Mirabeau, G.II, p. 182-188.

laquelle ce régime se constitue. Certes, “qui dit une république, dit peut-être un Etat mal gouverné”, suggère Vauvenargues, mais pour ajouter aussitôt, “ce qui fait aussi, je crois, qu’on y rencontre des vertus d’un caractère plus haut; car les hommes ne font jamais de si grandes choses, que lorsqu’ils peuvent faire impunément bien des sottises” (G.I no. 675, p. 468). Et Vauvenargues ne cesse, tout au long de son oeuvre, de défendre cette liberté “de faire de grandes fautes”, “pour éviter (aux hommes) un plus grand mal: la servitude” (G.I no. 162, p. 390). La république est donc bien, aux yeux de Vauvenargues, et du fait même d’institutions relativement débridées, le régime de la liberté. Avec la république, c’est la liberté elle-même comme puissance d’agir, dans la diversité actuelle de ses expressions, qui devient principe constitutif de la vie commune: la liberté comme “force”, comme “intérêt”, comme vertu, qui est le mouvement même de l’affirmation de la vie de chacun au principe de la constitution de la vie de tous. Comme la démocratie pour Spinoza, qui a pu “se former sans que le Droit Naturel y contredise le moins du monde”,⁴⁰ la république s’affirme pour Vauvenargues comme le régime le plus naturel.

En instaurant la dynamique (historiquement indépassable pour Vauvenargues) du conflit des conditions, au coeur même de la société politique, en fondant sur elle l’autorité de l’Etat, la république appelle, avec l’exercice pluriel de la liberté, l’épanouissement des passions et des vertus, mais aussi les honneurs reconnus au mérite et au talent de tous ceux qui ont su s’en rendre dignes.⁴¹ Avec

⁴⁰ *TTP* XVI, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 193 et 195; éd. Appuhn II, p. 266 et 268. Certes une “république sage” ne pourrait être “composée que de gens d’esprit” (comme la république des Lettres, G.I no. 675, p. 468). Mais, comme la société dans laquelle les hommes vivraient sous la conduite de la Raison ne nécessiterait aucune loi, cette république sage n’est pas un Etat politique (cf. Spinoza, *TTP* V, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 73; éd. Appuhn II, p. 106). En tenant compte au contraire de la nature réelle des hommes c’est-à-dire nécessairement passionnée, la république est, avec ses imperfections, le type d’Etat qui favorise au mieux l’exercice de la liberté et l’épanouissement des vertus. Vauvenargues n’est sans doute pas loin de penser, avec Machiavel, que c’est aux “tumultes de la noblesse et de la plèbe” qu’on doit “l’existence de la liberté romaine” (*Discours*, livre I, ch. IV, éd. Guiraudet, p. 44-45).

⁴¹ “Il a été un temps où l’ambition était un devoir et une vertu; on pouvait alors parler sûrement aux hommes de la gloire, parce qu’elle les touchait tous également. Les moindres citoyens avaient droit aux honneurs de leur patrie, et pouvaient aspirer sans présomption à s’en rendre dignes” (G.I no 36, p. 95). Ce qui ressort de cette réflexion c’est l’absence de droit de cité de la majorité des hommes dans un Etat monarchique, exclus de l’intérieur, ne jouissant ni des honneurs ni des richesses, frustrés dans leur désir naturel d’ambition (symptomatique est à ce propos la lettre

la liberté comme principe, la république établit en effet, par-delà la différence voire l'inégalité des conditions sociales, une *égalité réelle* des hommes dans l'exercice de la vertu et dans la reconnaissance sociale des mérites.⁴² Le portrait que, par bribes, Vauvenargues trace de la république est l'exact contraire de celui qu'il donne de la monarchie réelle dont l'ordre, écrit-il, est *de fait*, "injuste et barbare" (G.I no. 27, p. 88).⁴³

Certes un "prince éclairé" appuiera son gouvernement sur ceux que "la voix publique" (G.II, p. 53) désigne du fait de leurs vertus.⁴⁴ Mais ce monarque exemplaire, parce qu'il détient seul la sou-

qu'écrit Vauvenargues à Amelot le 14-01-1744, G.II, p. 265). C'est la différence avec la république; cf. Machiavel, *Discours*, livre I, ch. XVIII, éd. Guiraudet, p. 79, ch. LX, p. 149, livre III, ch. XXV p. 308. Relevons aussi la lucidité et la volonté politiques, implicitement antichrétiennes, qui sont exprimées ici (cf. G.I, p. 67-68 et no. 327, p. 422) et qu'on pouvait déjà lire chez Machiavel, *Discours*, Avant-propos, éd. Guiraudet, p. 34.

⁴² Avec la liberté de tous et cette forme historique d'égalité instable dans le conflit des conditions, mais aussi d'égalité des citoyens face aux honneurs, la république est également exemplaire par sa clémence envers ceux qui ont fait l'erreur de la trahir: "Ainsi se gouvernait le plus puissant et le plus redoutable peuple de la terre, écrit Vauvenargues à propos des Romains, et nous, petit peuple barbare, nous croyons qu'il n'y a jamais assez de gibets et de supplices!" (G.I no. 392, p. 434).

⁴³ "La vie n'est qu'un long combat où les hommes se disputent vivement la gloire, les plaisirs, l'autorité et les richesses. Mais il y en a qui apportent au combat des armes plus fortes, et qui sont invincibles par position: tels sont les enfants des grands, ceux qui naissent avec du bien, et déjà respectés du monde par leur qualité"; et c'est pour cela qu'en monarchie, "le mérite qui est nu, succombe; car aucun talent, aucune vertu, ne sauraient contraindre ceux qui sont pourvus par la fortune à se départir de leurs avantages; ils se prévalent avec empire des moindres privilèges de leur condition, et il n'est pas permis à la vertu de se mettre en concurrence. Cet ordre est injuste et barbare", (G.I no. 27, p. 88). Pour la critique de la noblesse, cf. *Les Grands*, G.I, p. 346, *Discours sur les mœurs du siècle*, G.I, p. 166 note 1, G.I no. 48, p. 104 et no. 186, p. 393; les rois craignent le peuple et ne savent ni le connaître ni l'aimer, G.I no. 375, p. 431, 464, 444, 693-694, 470-471; les rois craignent aussi l'ambition de leurs sujets alors qu'ils devraient la susciter, G.I no. 368-369, p. 430 et 561, p. 452. Si Vauvenargues admire Fénelon pour avoir su faire "retentir au pied du trône les calamités du genre humain foulé par les tyrans", et d'avoir ainsi défendu "la cause abandonnée des peuples" (G.I, p. 270), il reproche à l'auteur des *Aventures de Télémaque* d'avoir enseigné au prince la crainte de l'ambition; le machiavélisme de Richelieu (dont Vauvenargues avait lu le *Testament politique*) est ainsi opposé à cet "aimable philosophe" qu'est Fénelon (cf. les Dialogues *Richelieu et Mazarin*, G.II, p. 42-44, *Fénelon et Richelieu*, G.II, p. 44-46, *Philippe II et Comines*, G.II, p. 27-29). "Les ambitieux, écrit Vauvenargues, sont l'âme des corps politiques", G.I, p. 313 note 2. Or dans une monarchie, les emplois et les honneurs sont donnés à ceux qui ne le méritent pas (G.I, p. 116, 123). Sur l'ambition en monarchie, à rapprocher de Machiavel, *L'Art de la guerre*, éd. T. Guiraudet (Paris, 1991), livre II, p. 129 et Spinoza, *TP* VI, 6-7.

⁴⁴ Cf. Machiavel, *Discours*, livre III, ch. XXXIV, éd. Guiraudet, p. 324.

veraineté, devra avoir une âme capable de “se multiplier pour se suffire à tous” (G.II, p. 27-29). Il devra donc posséder les qualités plurielles et étendues qu’on trouve seulement dans une vaste assemblée tout en évitant les travers des “gouvernements populaires” assujettis aux fluctuations des affects et des préjugés de la foule (G.I no. 271, p. 409). Entre les imperfections de la monarchie réelle, qui ont fait de l’état de noblesse et de vertu un état de mollesse (G.I no. 372, p. 430), plongeant de surcroît la plus grande partie de la population dans l’inertie de la servitude, et les imperfections de la république, Vauvenargues choisit pourtant, à l’évidence, la république, c’est-à-dire le risque et la valeur constitutive du pluralisme et de la liberté.⁴⁵

Cependant, comme en éthique, Vauvenargues rejette toute idée de modèle d’un gouvernement idéal que l’on placerait abstraitement au-dessus de l’histoire réelle pour la juger. Car ce qui “est”, l’est nécessairement et c’est cette nécessité que le philosophe-historien doit comprendre⁴⁶ et, avec laquelle, le politique doit agir: soit les lois mêmes de la nature devenue, écrit Vauvenargues, “seconde nature” (G.I, p. 65) dans sa “condition” sociale et historique.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Notons que si les grands rois et les grands ministres sont très rares (G.II, p. 22-23), l’existence d’un “grand roi” ne garantit ni le bonheur ni la liberté du peuple... (G.I no. 378, p. 431). Et à ceux qui se demandent si le peuple est capable de cette liberté, Vauvenargues répond par la bouche du personnage de *Claudius*: “N’appréhendez pas d’ailleurs que le peuple vous manque: je sais, comme vous, que la coutume est tout, que tout le peuple se fait à sa condition et supporte patiemment les choses qu’il trouve établies, comme nos esclaves nés dans l’opprobre, portent leurs fers sans murmures; mais, si vous abattez la tyrannie, doutez-vous que ce peuple, qui baise à présent sa chaîne, ne s’accoutume bientôt de même à la liberté? Ce peuple est avili; mais, mes amis, c’est le gouvernement qui forme le caractère des nations” (G.I, p. 345). A rapprocher de Spinoza *TTP* XVII, éd. Gebhardt III, p. 217; éd. Appuhn II, p. 295, et *TP* VII, 27; et Machiavel, *Discours*, livre I, ch. LVIII, LIX et livre III, ch. I.

⁴⁶ Celle des mœurs par exemple, cf. G.I no. 318, p. 420, 325, 421, 383, 432; et Machiavel, *Discours* livre I, ch. XIV. Réalisme politique de Vauvenargues: “Les vrais maîtres dans la politique et dans la morale sont ceux qui tentent tout le bien qu’on peut exécuter, et rien au-delà” (G.I no. 433, p. 441); il faut ajuster ses actions aux “dispositions présentes des esprits” (G.I no. 434-435, p. 441-442); les changements se produisent par eux-mêmes, il ne faut pas les forcer (G.I, no. 438, p. 442). Cf. aussi Machiavel, *Discours* livre III, ch. VIII et IX. Vauvenargues revient plusieurs fois pourtant sur la réforme des mœurs et sur ceux qui ont eu le courage de la tenter et parfois le bonheur de la réussir (G.I p. 137, 168 et no. 439, p. 442).

⁴⁷ “Notre nature” ou “notre condition” sont souvent traitées en parallèle par Vauvenargues; ainsi par exemple, *ICEH, Du bon sens*, G.I, p. 11 ou p. 51: “si le coeur des hommes se forme sur leur condition”, écrit-il.

Articulée sur une ontologie du mouvement réel, sans finalité ni modèle, la dynamique politique des passions ouvre ainsi la politique et l'histoire à un avenir incertain qui fait du temps et des circonstances les déterminations majeures de l'exercice pluriel de la puissance d'agir. Ce que sait donc Vauvenargues, et que seul à son époque il ose enseigner, c'est que, ce que la force du temps (des circonstances, des passions, des intérêts, de la raison même...) a fait, d'autres forces, sous d'autres conditions, peuvent le défaire. C'est la grande liberté et la grande lucidité de sa perspective ontologico-historique. Ainsi le personnage de *Claudius* peut-il affirmer, en plein accord avec la métaphysique vauvenarguienne de la puissance d'agir, que:

tout change, que rien n'est stable, que le mouvement est une fatalité invincible; que les opinions, et les mœurs qui dépendent des opinions, les hommes en place, et les lois qui dépendent des hommes en place, les bornes des Etats et leur puissance, l'intérêt des Etats voisins, tout varie nécessairement: or [...] il est impossible qu'un Etat où tout varie, et qui voit tout varier autour de lui, ne change pas à son tour de gouvernement (G.I, p. 345).

Ainsi, si la force et l'intérêt sont les principes réels de toute politique, ils ne sont pas nécessairement (comme les passions elles-mêmes qui les suscitent) des vecteurs de domination et de servitude. Comme le montre la république, la force et l'intérêt peuvent être aussi des vecteurs de liberté et de vertu. Car la liberté, comme puissance, est elle-même au principe du mouvement réel du réel, comme elle peut être au principe d'une politique étayée sur le développement des forces productives humaines, des droits de nature qui expriment dans la diversité des vertus et des talents, la productivité même de la vie, son processus infini. L'histoire comme "nature", exprime la génération continue du réel selon un temps contingent, celui dit Vauvenargues des "caprices et [des] jeux de la nature" (G.I no. 414, p. 438), qui pourrait cependant devenir—quand les hommes auront la force et le courage de le vouloir et les circonstances pour exercer cette vertu—celui de la constitution collective de la liberté. Et c'est pour cela que dans les domaines de l'histoire et de la politique, libérés de tout modèle et de toute finalité, "Il faut tout attendre et tout craindre du temps et des hommes" (G.I no. 102, p. 383). C'est la leçon du Grand Florentin et de Spinoza qu'à sa manière Vauvenargues perpétue.

LA CONGRÉGATION DE L'INDEX ET LA CENSURE DES OEUVRES DE SPINOZA

Pina Totaro

Dans le vaste panorama intellectuel de l'Europe du XVII^{ème} siècle, une caractéristique distingue l'Italie des autres pays: la minutieuse oeuvre de contrôle culturel exercée par le Saint-Siège sur son territoire, le seul, il est bon de le rappeler, dans lequel coexistaient les deux Inquisitions, l'espagnole dans les États dépendant de la couronne d'Aragon (Sicile et Sardaigne, à l'exception de Naples et de Milan), et l'Inquisition romaine dans le reste de la péninsule.¹ Cette situation particulière, qui se radicalisa entre le XVI^{ème} et le XVII^{ème} siècle, a rendu possible le développement de phénomènes qui ne se sont manifestés nulle part ailleurs ou qui, loin de l'Italie, ont revêtu des aspects ou des significations différentes.

Quand il devint clair pour la Congrégation de l'Index—réunie pour la première fois à Rome le 27 mars 1571—qu'il serait impossible d'exercer une oeuvre efficace de surveillance dans la production et la circulation toujours plus rapides des livres en Europe, le cardinal Bellarmino, consultant de la Congrégation romaine du Saint-Office de l'Inquisition, indiqua "nos territoires d'Italie" comme les seuls dans lesquels on pouvait intervenir afin d'enrayer la diffusion d'idées "hérétiques". Il recommandait donc à chacun de ses collègues inquisiteurs des différentes provinces:

Mon père, les hérétiques et les ennemis ne se fatigant jamais—je ne sais si je dois dire de ce Saint-Siège ou du salut de leurs âmes—de semer continuellement le poison de leurs erreurs dans le domaine de la chrétienté, avec tant de livres pernicieux qu'ils éditent tous les jours, il est nécessaire de ne pas s'endormir et nous nous efforçons de les extirper, du moins dans les lieux où nous pouvons le faire.²

¹ Cf. A. Del Col & G. Paolin, "Introduzione", dans: *L'Inquisizione romana in Italia nell'età moderna. Archivi, problemi di metodo e nuove ricerche*. Atti del seminario internazionale Trieste, 18-20 maggio 1988 (Roma, 1991), p. 15. En particulier, pour l'Inquisition en Italie, J. Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy. Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (Binghamton, New York, 1991).

² "Padre mio, non si straccando gli heretici e gl'inimici, non so s'io devo dir più

La fracture qui se créa entre l'Europe cultivée et l'Italie, n'empêcha toutefois pas l'introduction et la diffusion, au-delà des Alpes, des livres et des doctrines interdits: les livres hétérodoxes ou au contenu 'scandaleux' entraient en effet clandestinement en Italie, malgré les sévères contrôles aux postes de douane et les recommandations pressantes de la Congrégation romaine aux organes périphériques.³

Les licences et les permis de lecture de livres interdits accordés aux hommes de lettres, savants et érudits,⁴ non seulement dans les grandes villes comme Rome, Naples, Venise et Florence, mais aussi dans les centres mineurs de la péninsule, témoignent toutefois de la force expansive du marché culturel et des lacunes d'un contrôle de censure disposé à accorder l'indult dans le but de conserver la rigidité de la norme.

Dans ce cadre, les sociétés éditoriales locales, pour éviter—comme cela arriva à beaucoup d'entre elles—de disparaître, furent obligées de rechercher de nouveaux expédients: "Afin d'avoir ce genre de livres,—écrit en effet l'inquisiteur de Bologne dans un document retrouvé par Antonio Rotondò—les amoureux de nouveautés s'ar-

presto de questa Santa Sede o dell'anime proprie, di seminar continuamente le zizanie de i loro errori nel campo della cristianità con tanti libri perniziosi che alla giornata mandano fuori di novo, è necessario che non si dormi, ma ci affatichiamo di estirpargli almeno in quei lochi dove potiamo." A. Rotondò, "La censura ecclesiastica e la cultura", dans: *Storia d'Italia*, éd. R. Romano & C. Vivanti, V, *I documenti*, 2 (Torino, 1973), p. 1399. La traduction française du texte est de l'auteur, comme les autres citations qui suivent entre guillemets, en italien dans l'original.

³ Parmi les documents relatifs à l'introduction de littérature clandestine en Italie, provenant en particulier de la Hollande et de l'Angleterre, Rotondò cite un témoignage de 1609: "Si è avuta notizia che gli heretici d'Inghilterra et d'Olanda hanno stampato molti libri in lingua italiana e spagnola, pieni affatto d'heresia, con l'intenzione d'introdurli e distribuirli in Italia Spagna et Portogallo, il che facilmente potrà succederli con occasione ch'essi Olandesi, dopo la tregua con le Provincie Unite, verranno in Spagna et Italia con mercanzie". Rotondò, "La censura ecclesiastica", p. 1414.

⁴ En 1561, des dispositions ont été données dans le but d'adoucir les lois trop rigides qui réglaient précédemment la censure ecclésiastique; certains diocésains obtinrent ainsi la faculté d'accorder la permission de posséder et de lire ("retinendi ac legendi") les livres interdits, non sans avoir précédemment "diligenter erasis sive deletis haereticorum nominibus". Cf. à ce propos, J. Hilgers, "Bücherverbot und Bücherzensur des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts in Italien", *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 38 (1911), p. 120, cité par Rotondò, "La censura ecclesiastica", p. 1452. Il faut aussi rappeler, qu'encore de nos jours, l'art. 1398 du code de droit canonique établit que "la proibizione di un libro fa sì che non si possa, senza la debita licenza, né pubblicarlo, né leggerlo, né ritenerlo, né venderlo, né tradurlo in altra lingua, né in alcun modo passarlo ad altri".

rangent pour éviter la douane et en trouvent facilement le moyen, les voies pour parvenir à leurs fins étant nombreuses”.⁵

La censure des livres devint institutionnelle en pleine époque contre-réformiste, quand—après la publication de mises au ban et d'édits dans lesquels les imprimeurs, les typographes et les libraires étaient sommés de ne pas imprimer, composer, diffuser ou même seulement posséder des livres écrits en latin ou en d'autres langues vernaculaires sans l'autorisation du Maître du Sacré-Palais—l'on arriva à la publication du premier catalogue de livres interdits, voulu par Paul IV en 1559.⁶ Comme on le sait, les règles qui y étaient établies, furent revues plusieurs fois par la suite, et la possibilité de la formule de l'*expurgatio*, indiquée par l'expression *donec corrigatur*, fut aussi introduite.

L'histoire de la Congrégation de l'Index—créée par Pie V pour appuyer le Saint Office de l'Inquisition dans la surveillance des livres publiés—, surtout pour ce qui concerne le XVII^{ème} siècle, n'a pas encore été l'objet d'études approfondies, consacrés, par exemple, à d'autres institutions de contrôle qui, comme l'Index, ont agi en fonction des changements de la société et des groupes dominants.⁷ Il manque, en particulier, des études qui reconstruisent l'influence et l'activité exercées envers la philosophie 'qu'ils appellent moderne'.

⁵ “Gli amanti di novità per avere tal sorta di stampe, procurano di scansare la dogana e facilmente trovano la maniera, essendo tante le strade aperte per venire al loro disegno”. Rotondò, “La censura ecclesiastica”, p. 1422.

⁶ La même année était édité le premier *Index* espagnol, publié par l'Inquisition royale qui avait toujours conservé son autonomie vers l'Inquisition de Rome, refusant ainsi de se conformer aux règles établies par une commission de 18 membres nommés par le Concile en matière d'interdiction des livres dans l'*Index* de Trente (1564). Ces règles, restées en vigueur jusqu'en 1897, prévoyaient trois catégories différentes de livres interdits selon le motif de cette interdiction, promulguée soit *propter auctorem*; soit à cause de la *materia prava* ou de la *non sana doctrina* contenue dans les volumes; soit encore, *propter ignotum nomen auctoris*, ou *ob doctrinam malam*. Selon ce schéma, les livres interdits furent insérés par ordre alphabétique dans les différents *Index* à partir de 1664 seulement. Sur l'organisation et l'histoire de la Congrégation de l'Index, cf. G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, XVI (Venezia, 1852-1853), *ad vocem* “Congregazioni cardinalizie”, p. 211-216; sur la cour romaine et l'activité de la curie: N. Del Re, *La Curia romana, lineamenti storico-giuridici* (Roma, 1970; 3^{ème} éd.), p. 325-329; sur le milieu romain durant la période qui nous intéresse: L. Fiorani, “Astrologi, superstiziosi e devoti nella società romana del Seicento”, dans: *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma*, II (Roma, 1978), p. 97-162. Sur ces arguments, toujours utile, outre le livre de D. Francke cité ci-dessous, F.A. Zaccaria, *Storia polemica delle proibizioni de' libri* (Roma, 1777), en particulier, la bibliographie insérée dans la préface, p. xiii- xviii.

⁷ Cf. Del Col & Paolin, “Introduzione”, p. 23.

Les difficultés d'accès aux archives de la Congrégation du Saint-Office et de celles de l'Index, conservées aujourd'hui dans le siège de la Congrégation pour la doctrine de la foi, rendent particulièrement ardue la recherche sur les sources et sur le matériel documentaire original.

Sans renoncer à sa prétention de contrôle universel, non seulement sur les livres, mais sur toute forme d'expression culturelle et artistique, la Congrégation s'organisa sur le modèle de celle du Saint-Office sans jamais en atteindre l'importance et le prestige.⁸ Elle était dirigée, tout comme le Saint-Office, par un préfet et comprenait un certain nombre de cardinaux, le Maître du Sacré-Palais avec des fonctions d'assistant perpétuel, un secrétaire, en général un dominicain, et enfin des consultants et des examinateurs. Les premiers se réunissaient d'habitude le mercredi au siège romain des dominicains, le couvent de la Minerve, situé sur la place du même nom, tandis que les consultants se réunissaient le lundi, dans l'immeuble du Saint-Office. Les décrets promulgués par la Congrégation et affichés à Rome dans des lieux pré-établis⁹ avaient un effet immédiat dans toute la Chrétienté.

Au nombre relativement exigu de permissions de lecture de livres interdits, concédés par le Saint-Siège sur intercession de quelque prélat, correspondait une grande quantité de mesures adoptées contre les détenteurs non autorisés des mêmes oeuvres. Dans le chapitre consacré aux "Détenteurs de livres interdits", contenu dans un manuscrit sur la *Prattica per proceder nelle Cause del S.to Officio* du XVII^{ème} siècle, qui est conservé dans la Bibliothèque Apostolique

⁸ Dans un recueil manuscrit de *Relationi della Città, e Corte di Roma*, conservé aux Archives Secrètes Vaticanes [ASV] (Mss. Chigiano N. III. 84.8, c. 63v), on peut lire que la Congrégation de la S.te Inquisition "è la prima e la Principale di tutte l'altre" et que "l'Inquisitione di Roma è superiore a tutte l'altre Inquisitioni per tutto il mondo, e tutte l'altre obediscono quando le comanda. In essa si trattano non solo le cose di prigionieri, che per il tempo si pigliano in Roma per causa di fede mà ancora tutte quelle, che gl'Inquisitori, o Vescovi per l'importanza, o difficoltà delle cause mandano a Roma a consultare, et ancora quando le parti sono gravate da Vescovi, o Inquisitori si rivedeno, e se gli fa la giustizia". A propos de la prétention de contrôle universel, le code de droit canonique (art. 1396), toujours en vigueur, reporte que: "i libri condannati dalla Sede Apostolica restano proibiti in tutto il mondo e in qualunque lingua vengano tradotti".

⁹ Les lieux où étaient affichés les édits à Rome sont indiqués, d'habitude, dans les décrets par la formule: "...Supradictum Decretum affixum, & publicatum fuit ad valuas Basilicae Principis Apostolorum, Palatij S. Officij, in Acie Campi Florae, ac alijs locis solitis, & consuetis Urbis...".

Vaticane, sont décrites les procédures d'intervention prévues pour ce genre de délit. Et "la première chose, que l'on fait" dans le cas de personnes "dénoncées et inculpées de détention de livres interdits" c'est la perquisition. Une fois établie la possession de livres "pernicieux, c'est-à-dire contenant des propositions hérétiques, erronées" et "proches de l'erreur de foi", on procède à un interrogatoire serré pendant lequel on accuse les détenteurs de livres interdits du délit de "les avoir lus, longuement tenus et fait venir de loin, avec diligence et frais, et les avoir achetés". Après quoi, on leur demande ensuite une dénonciation: on veut connaître "les complices, c'est-à-dire, qui leur a donné de tels livres" et "s'ils les ont communiqués à d'autres", "s'ils se sont servis des Doctrines contenues dans ces livres, en écrivant, en lisant ou en prêchant". Enfin, l'on procède à la cérémonie de l'abjuration. Pour les "personnes religieuses", des peines très spéciales sont prévues, et ceci est une preuve de la grande circulation de littérature interdite dans les rangs même des religieux: ils sont privés "de voix active et passive, sont suspendus à Divinis, des offices et des charges de lecture, d'enseigner et de prêcher pour une période arbitraire, et on leur impose des pénitences salutaires".¹⁰

¹⁰ Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane [BAV], Cité du Vatican: Mss. Chigiano N. III. 84.8, *Prattica per proceder nelle Cause del S.to Officio del Card. Scaglia*, dans *Relationi della Città, e Corte di Roma*, cc. 171-173. Si le manuscrit est très clair en matière d'interdiction de livres, il contient également des indications très précises à propos des oeuvres qui peuvent être lues et qui peuvent apprendre beaucoup à un homme d'église qui est aussi un homme de lettres. Dans le chapitre contenant une "Instruizione data al Sig.r Cardinale de' Medici, come s'ha da governare alla Corte di Roma", on peut lire: "Non deverà occuparsi un Card.l de Medici intorno a testi, né a Chiose, né a rivoltar Bartoli, né Baldi, studij seben necessarij nel Commertio Civile, non accomodati però a far un huomo Grande nell'attioni del mondo; ma si deverà applicare dopo l'acquisto delle lettere humane, greche, e latine, alla Rettorica; et a quella di Aristotele particolarmente, libro degno invero d'essere per le mani d'un Principe Grande, all'Ethica e politica del medesimo autore, accompagnandovi i Dialoghi di Platone della Repubblica e delle leggi, libri ripieni in tutte le parti di dottrina maravigliosa, e molto accomodata ad ornare ancora un Signore Ecclesiastico. Vi si potrà aggiungere quello, ch'insegna Cicerone nel libro degl'Offitij, Plutarco nell'opuscoli, e Seneca nell'opere sue. Dentro a questi libri si racchiude quanto di buono, e di maraviglioso può servire a far un huomo, e veramente erudito, et accomodato al servitio publico, et che aspiri a vera reputazione. A questi studij si deverà accompagnare la lettione dell'Historie, così profane, come ecclesiastiche [...]. Servirà mirabilmente al Cardinal de Medici il far acquisto dell'arte del dire con eloquenza, insegnata ottimamente d'Aristotele nel 3. libro della Rettorica a...[sic] ma poco importerà, et l'habilità di potere eccellentemente parlare, et il desiderio di farlo, se prima non imparerà la lingua latina, e non l'imposterà con facilità, cosa importantissima, e più che necessaria [...]. Gioverebbe al medesimo l'haver Terentio molto familiare, et Sudoniconenes dell'esercitation della lingua latina". Et encore, il

En outre, il ne faut pas oublier que la possession de livres interdits n'était pas tolérée non plus par le pouvoir politique, qui se montra parfois encore, plus zélé que le pouvoir ecclésiastique pour ce qui concerne la répression et l'interdiction des livres. Il suffit ici de mentionner le cas de Lorenzo Panciatichi, lettré et homme politique florentin, mort en 1676, dont le cadavre, sur ordre du Grand-Duc Cosimo III et seulement parce qu'"il possédait quelques Livres interdits—comme Antonio Magliabechi l'écrit à Jacobus Gronovius en 1676¹¹—avait été exhumé et brûlé".

Un manuscrit des premières décennies du XVII^{ème} siècle, retrouvé dans la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane et intitulé "Index librorum prohibitorum existentium in Archivio Sancti Officij Urbis", fournit la liste des volumes condamnés par la Congrégation, mais conservés dans ses archives, confirmant ainsi l'existence d'une riche bibliothèque "interdite" possédée par les inquisiteurs eux-mêmes.¹²

Le recours à la censure des livres, au moyen de la promulgation de décrets de "permissio, prohibitio, expurgatio & impressio", est une mesure adoptée de manière tellement systématique et avec l'institution d'une structure de contrôle spécifique, seulement par l'Église catholique. Toutefois, le cas de Spinoza—un véritable "hérétique pour toutes les Églises"—témoigne du recours à une telle pratique par les différentes orthodoxies.¹³

devrait connaître "le Metheore d'Aristotele studio nobile, di diletto, et da Prencipe [...] Crederai che dovesse astenersi dal perder tempo nello studio dell'Astrologia giudiziaria, dove buona parte della Corte è immersa, convenendo al Cardinal Grande far con buon consiglio e ragionevol discorso quello che conviene, lasciando poi a Dio la cura del resto non si scordando venuto agl'anni più maturi, di non applicarsi con tutto l'affetto alla lettione de Padri, studio, che servirà mirabilmente a edificare, e tranquillare l'animo, staccarlo dal Mondo, e tenerlo rivolto alla vita futura" (cc. 278-279).

¹¹ Universitätsbibliothek [UB] München: 4. Cod. ms. 777, c. 118r, A. Magliabechi a J. Gronovius, Firenze, novembre 1676.

¹² BAV, Città del Vaticano: Barberino Latino 3131, cc. 56. Parmi les volumes, rangés dans un ordre alphabétique approximatif, figurent quelques oeuvres de Giordano Bruno, Bodin, Telesio, Cardano, Molinos, Campanella et les *Dialogues d'amour* de Leone Ebreo.

¹³ En général, pour l'interdiction de livres d'auteurs juifs, cf. M. Carmilly-Weinberger, *Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Jewish History* (New York, 1977); pour l'Église de Genève, voir C. Santschi, *La censure à Genève au XVII^{ème} siècle* (Genève, 1978); la liste des publications condamnées par l'Église anglicane est répertoriée dans W.H. Hart, *Index expurgatorius anglicanus, or a descriptive catalogue of the principal books printed or published in England, wich have been suppressed or burnt by the common hangman, or censured, or for which the authors, printers or publishers have been prosecuted* (London, 1872-1878). Tous ces textes sont cités par B. Neveu, *L'erreur et son*

Au cours de ces dernières années, différentes contributions sur les évènements liés à l'excommunication prononcée le 27 juillet 1656 contre le philosophe par la communauté hébraïque d'Amsterdam ont été publiées. Cette excommunication fut suivie, comme on le sait, par l'interdiction promulguée par les États de Hollande de "te drucken, divulgeeren ofte verkoopen op Auctien ofte andersints" le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, le 19 juillet 1674, et plus tard, le 25 juin 1678, les *Opera Posthuma*.¹⁴

Le précieux travail d'archives de Freudenthal a permis de reconstituer le long iter des condamnations des différents Synodes et autres communautés des Provinces-Unies, contre "les blasphèmes et les impiétés énormes du malheureux Spinoza": il s'agit d'un grand nombre de documents, dont beaucoup sont relatifs au *Tractatus*, et aux *Opera Posthuma*, et d'autres sont dirigés, plus en général, contre "cette rongearie gangrène" du spinozisme.¹⁵

Une recherche a été commencée récemment sur la censure catholique:¹⁶ la découverte et l'examen de deux décrets originaux des condamnations émises par la Congrégation de l'Index, le 13 mars 1679 et le 29 août 1690,¹⁷ ont tout d'abord permis de résoudre certaines ambiguïtés présentes dans l'enregistrement des textes de Spinoza dans les éditions successives de l'*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Au terme de la longue histoire de la censure de ces textes, qui, en vérité, a duré jusqu'à la fin du siècle, l'unique oeuvre de Spinoza dont la circulation était permise, fut les *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae*—la seule publiée avec le nom de l'auteur—dans laquelle on ne retrouvait peut-être pas cette 'profession d'athéisme' qui semblait clairement exprimée dans les autres textes.

juge. *Remarques sur les censures doctrinales à l'époque moderne* (Napoli, 1993), p. 406-407. L'expression "eretici per tutte le Chiese" est utilisée pour indiquer les penseurs qui ont soutenu l'idée de tolérance religieuse, par Del Col & Paolin, "Introduzione", p. 16.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellschriften, Urkunden und nichtamtlichen Nachrichten* (Leipzig, 1899), doc. 48, p. 139-141 et doc. 85, p. 179-181. Voir aussi tous les autres documents transcrits par Freudenthal concernant les plaintes, rapports et demandes d'interdiction des oeuvres de Spinoza et d'autres auteurs considérés comme 'hérétiques' par les synodes d'Amsterdam, Utrecht et La Haye.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, doc. 61 de 22 Avril 1676, p. 152.

¹⁶ Cf. E. Canone & G. Totaro, "Spinoza all'indice. Nota su un capitolo poco conosciuto della storia dello spinozismo", *Studi filosofici* 16 (1993), p. 63-87.

¹⁷ Des exemplaires originaux des décrets se trouvent dans les recueils d'édits, de bulles et de brefs conservés dans les Bibliothèques Casanatense et Angelica de Rome et dans la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane.

Giuseppe Valletta, l'homme de lettres napolitain qui contribua de manière décisive à la diffusion de la philosophie cartésienne à Naples, retenait en effet, qu'ayant été publié en 1663, c'est-à-dire avant que l'auteur ne devienne "de profession athée", ce livre n'était pas encore sali "par cette peste".¹⁸

Les deux décrets émis par la censure romaine constituent un document essentiel pour l'étude de l'accueil de Spinoza en Italie. Ils suivent en effet de quelques années seulement, la lettre de Niels Stensen "ad Novae Philosophiae Reformatorem" de 1675,¹⁹ qui peut être considérée comme "le premier document public relatif à Spinoza, le premier témoignage de l'intérêt pour sa doctrine en Italie".²⁰

Franz Heinrich Reusch, éditeur de l'ouvrage classique sur les index de livres interdits, relevait toutefois une imprécision dans l'*Index* de Benoît XIV de 1758, le premier dans lequel figure l'indication de la date des décrets de condamnation:²¹ en effet, les *Opera*

¹⁸ L'expression est extraite de l'*Historia filosofica*, rédigée vers 1704: cf. G. Valletta, *Opere filosofiche*, éd. M. Rak (Firenze, 1975), p. 325. A propos de Valletta, de sa bibliothèque et de ses études, voir V.I. Comparato, *Giuseppe Valletta. Un intellettuale napoletano della fine del Seicento* (Napoli, 1970).

¹⁹ Ces dispositions ont été prises à l'époque située entre les deux premiers textes enregistrés dans la *Bibliografia* de Cristina Santinelli qui est, jusqu'à nos jours, le répertoire le plus complet sur la réception de Spinoza dans la péninsule: cf. C. Santinelli, *Spinoza in Italia. Bibliografia degli scritti italiani su Spinoza dal 1675 al 1982* (Urbino, 1983). Les deux premiers textes enregistrés dans la section 'B', relative aux études sur la pensée spinozienne, sont en effet la lettre de N. Stensen (*Nicolai Stenonis ad Novae Philosophiae Reformatorem de vera Philosophia Epistola* (Florentiae, 1675), reproduite dans Spinoza, *Opera*, éd. C. Gebhardt, (Heidelberg, 1972), 4 vols., IV, p. 292-298 et la lettre de M. Fardella à A. Magliabechi: *Lettera all'Illustrissimo ed Eruditissimo Signore Antonio Magliabechi, Bibliotecario del Serenissimo Granduca di Toscana, in cui brevemente s'esaminano e rigettano l'opposizione proposte contra i principii della Cartesiana Filosofia dal Dottissimo Signore Matteo Giorgi, nella sua Epistola detta Saggio della Nuova Dottrina di Renato Des Cartes, stampata in Genova l'anno 1694* (Venezia, 1697), p. 41 et suiv. Mais, pour cette lettre et d'autres de Fardella contenant des allusions aux oeuvres de Spinoza, cf. M. Fardella, *Lettere ad Antonio Magliabechi (1691-1709)*, éd. S. Femiano (Cassino, 1978), p. 73, 80 et 85. Cf. aussi E. Giancotti, "Nota sulla diffusione della filosofia di Spinoza in Italia", *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 42 (1963), p. 339-362.

²⁰ Giancotti, "Nota sulla diffusione della filosofia di Spinoza in Italia", p. 341.

²¹ Reusch observe tout d'abord: "Von B. Spinoza wurde der Tractatus theologico-politicus 1679, 9 Jahre nach Erscheinen verboten (er steht noch heute als anonymes Buch im Index), gleichzeitig die Opera posthuma, Amst. 1677. Von philosophischen Schriften protestantischer Verfasser stehen nur wenige im Index, von Leibniz und Chr. Wolff keine. Im spanischen Index stehen auch Cartesius, Malebranche und Spinoza nicht" (F.H. Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Literaturgeschichte*, Bd. 2, Abt. 1, (Aalen, 1967; réim. anast. de

Posthuma y semblent condamnés par deux fois et ce par décrets successifs. En réalité, avec l'interdiction du 13 mars 1679, les *Epistolae*, l'*Ethica*, le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, et le *Tractatus Politicus* étaient explicitement condamnés comme anonymes. Les autres oeuvres comprises dans les *Opera Posthuma*, en admettant qu'elles aient été connues par la Congrégation de l'Index, restaient exclues de l'interdiction.

La *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* de Lodewijk Meyer, imprimée en même temps que le *Tractatus* en 1673, et simultanément condamnée, en 1674, par les États de Hollande, ne fut au contraire jamais mise à l'index, bien que le livre ait eu une certaine circulation en Italie et ait été amplement lu et commenté et ce, même par la suite, après la diffusion des oeuvres de Philippus van Limborch, le théologue hollandais apprécié pour sa tendance rationaliste modérée.²²

C'est seulement par le décret du 29 août 1690 que tous les *Opera Posthuma* furent interdits, mais le nom de l'auteur continuait à y rester abrégé comme sur le frontispice des *Opera*. Les Index "librorum prohibitorum", publiés après la promulgation des deux ordres de censure, respectivement en 1681 et en 1704, reproduisent le texte des décrets correspondants.²³ La mesure prise en 1679 portait la sig-

l'éd. Bonn, 1885), p. 599. De Leibniz, cependant, fut prohibée par le décret du 12 mars 1703, l'*Historia arcana, seu de vita Alexandri VII*). Donc, Reusch ajoute: "Spinoza's Opera posthuma stehen in den älteren Indices nicht; erst Ben. hat sie aufgenommen. Er gibt als Datum des Verbotes 13. Mart. 1679 et 29. Aug. 1690 an. Das erstere ist aber des Datum des Verbotes des Tractatus.—1826 wurde verb.: Theologisch-politische Abhandlung von Spinoza, freie Uebersetzung und mit Anmerkungen begleitet von Z. [recte J.] A. Kalb, München 1825, wohl nicht die gefährlichste unter den vielen Schriften über Spinoza.—Die Schrift des mit Spinoza befreundeten Amsterdamer Arztes Ludwig Meyer, *Philosophia scripturae interpres, exercitatio paradoxa, in qua veram philos. infallibilem s. literas interpretandi normam esse, apodictice demonstratur*, Eleutheropoli 1666, 4. [...], ist nicht verb." Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, p. 609. Sur l'histoire des divers Index, mais avec une empreinte complètement différente, voir aussi J. Hilgers, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher in seiner neuen Fassung dargelegt und rechtlich-historisch gewürdigt* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1907).

²² Cf. P. Zambelli, *La formazione filosofica di Antonio Genovesi* (Napoli, 1972), p. 358.

²³ Cf. *Index librorum prohibitorum Innoc. XI. P.M. iussu editus usque ad annum 1681. Eidem accedit in fine Appendix usque ad mensem iunij 1704* (Romae, 1704), p. 90 (pour les *Lettres*), p. 94 (pour l'*Ethica*) et p. 281 (pour le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* et pour le *Tractatus Politicus*). Dans l'*Appendix*, p. 311, enfin, on enregistre "B.D.S. Opera postuma [sic]".

nature du père prêcheur Giacomo Ricci, qui, ayant été élu procureur général de l'Ordre des dominicains en 1684, nomma à sa place Giulio Maria Bianchi et confia également à ce dernier la chaire de théologie de l'Université de la Sapienza. Ce sera ce même Bianchi qui signera, en qualité de secrétaire de la Congrégation de l'Index, le décret de 1690 contre Spinoza.²⁴

Les deux ordres de condamnation avaient été signés sous deux papautés particulièrement actives en fait de censure, comme le démontrent amplement les mesures prises par le Saint-Siège en ce qui concerne la "question janséniste". En particulier, le décret de 1690 avait été inspiré par la politique intransigeante du spécialiste vénitien de droit canon, Piero Ottoboni, qui, sous le nom d'Alexandre VIII, avait succédé au pape Innocent XI (1676-1689), après s'être distingué, en qualité de cardinal du Saint-Office, par une persécution acharnée de l' 'hérésie' quiétiste.

On n'a trouvée aucune trace d'un éventuel débat concernant la condamnation des oeuvres de Spinoza dans les *Acta Sacrae Congregationis Indicis ab Anno 1668 per totum 1691*, conservés dans la collection Barberini de la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane, et qui contiennent les procès-verbaux des réunions de la Congrégation.²⁵

²⁴ Cf. *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 10 (Roma, 1968), ad vocem "G.M. Bianchi", de G. Pignatelli. Un bref manuscrit de Ricci, qui était secrétaire de la Congrégation de l'Index, se trouve dans la BAV, Cité du Vatican: Barberino Latino 2041, *Ricci Secretarii Congregationis Indicis librorum Iudicium de damnatione librorum, et animadversiones in dissertationes et notas P. Paschasii Quesnel*, cc. 83. L'auteur de ce dernier texte, personnage important de la curie romaine, était le frère d'un des plus célèbres mathématiciens de son siècle, Michelangelo Ricci, partisan de la création d'académies et animateur d'études à caractère scientifique dans le cercle de la reine Christine. Cf.: S. Rotta, "L'Accademia fisico-matematica Ciampiniana: un'iniziativa di Cristina?", dans: *Cristina di Svezia. Scienza e alchimia nella Roma barocca* (Roma, 1990), p. 99-186; L. Pepe, "Note sulla diffusione della *Géométrie* di Descartes in Italia nel sec. XVII", *Bollettino di storia delle Scienze Matematiche*, 1982-2, p. 249-288.

²⁵ BAV, Cité du Vatican: Barberino Latino 3147, *Acta Sacrae Congregationis Indicis librorum prohibitorum ab anno 1668 ad annum 1691 inclusive, additis decretis impressis. Carolus Card. Barberino collectore, cuius originales notae passim occurrunt*, cc. 270. Le manuscrit contient les ordres du jour des réunions de la Congrégation "in Palatio Quirinali", et les procès-verbaux qui concernent celles-ci. La discussion portait en général sur un nombre de volumes plutôt limité par rapport aux livres prohibés dans les décrets qui étaient promulgués par après. Pour avoir une idée du contenu des réunions, on peut citer l'ordre du jour de la première de celles-ci, le 10 janvier 1668, pendant laquelle le père T. De Nuce proposa, par exemple, la censure de deux livres de F. Bacon "qui non potuerunt referri in preterita Congregatione". Dans la réunion du 4 décembre 1685 "referet p. vice D. Carolus Borromeus Piazza Partem 3^a, et 4^a Theatri Britanici editi a Gregorio Leti".

L'ordre du jour de la séance du 29 août 1690, durant laquelle les *Opera Posthuma* furent intégralement interdits, en plus, bien entendu, du *Tractatus*, prévoyait seulement l'intervention, de la part du "vice P. Fr. Paulinus Bernardini" au sujet de "duos libros Gallica lingua sub titulo, l'Esprit de M.r Arnauld" et la présentation de deux livres desquels "R.P. Abb.e D. Celestino Guicciardini" et "P. Antonius Baldigiani" auraient parlé.²⁶

Les documents publiés par Orcibal et Klever,²⁷ provenant tous, presque exclusivement, des archives des Pays-Bas, ont permis de reconstruire quelques étapes de la mise à l'index des oeuvres de Spinoza par rapport à une période peu connue de leur circulation en Italie; période pendant laquelle les bases de la future diffusion du spinozisme, 'disguised' ou 'overt', ont été posées.

La peur de la diffusion de l'athéisme émerge particulièrement des témoignages recueillis, cet athéisme dont le philosophe fut considéré le partisan le plus acharné bien avant que Bayle n'en divulgue la célébrité comme "athée de système", même comme "le premier qui ait réduit en système l'athéisme, & qui en ait fait un corps de doctrine lié et tissu selon les manières des Geomètres".²⁸

Le spinozisme devint partout synonyme d'athéisme et d'autant plus en Italie, la nation qui se distingue des autres, comme l'avait écrit Gabriel Naudé, comme étant "pleine de libertins et d'athées et de gens qui ne croient rien; et néanmoins le nombre de ceux qui ont écrit de l'immortalité de l'âme est presque infini".²⁹

Dans une lettre du 18 septembre 1677, le cardinal Francesco

²⁶ *Ibid.* Malheureusement, la documentation relative aux travaux de la Congrégation pendant l'année 1679, à la date du premier décret contre Spinoza, manque dans ce manuscrit.

²⁷ Voir: J. Orcibal, "Les Jansénistes face à Spinoza", *Revue de Littérature comparée* 23 (1949), p. 441-468; W. Klever, "Letters to and from Neercassel about Spinoza and Rieuwertsz", *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988), p. 329-338. Cf. aussi H.J. Siebrand, *Spinoza and the Netherlands* (Assen-Maastricht, 1988). Pour la transcription de certains des passages cités ici, on s'est reporté au texte publié par W. Klever.

²⁸ P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, III (Rotterdam, 1715; 3^{me} éd.), p. 610. Sur l'accusation d'athéisme et sur la signification de ce terme, du XVII^{me} siècle jusqu'à nos jours, a récemment insisté W. van Bunge dans un essai intitulé "Spinoza's atheisme", dans: *Sporen van Spinoza*, éd. E. Kuypers (Leuven-Apeldoorn, 1993), p. 89-113. L'article, traduit en français, a été publié dans le *Bulletin de l'Association des amis de Spinoza* 29 (1993), p. 1-23.

²⁹ Pour ce jugement et pour d'autres de la même teneur (cités par G. Spini, *Ricerca dei libertini. La teoria dell'impostura delle religioni nel Seicento italiano* (Firenze, 1983) p. 7), cf. *Naudoeana et Patiniana* (Amsterdam, 1703), p. 8, 46-47, 104.

Barberini de la Congrégation de la S.te Inquisition demande à Johannes van Neercassel—évêque de Castoria et vicaire apostolique dans les Provinces-Unies³⁰—de lui envoyer des nouvelles d’“un livre manuscrit sur l’athéisme” dont “l’on suppose” que l’auteur a aussi composé “d’autres oeuvres imprimées”.³¹ Et Van Neercassel répète dans sa lettre du 25 novembre 1677, l’accusation de Barberini: “Ex mandato, quo placuit Vestrae Eminentiae suum famulum honorare, diligenter quaesivi, num in Hollandia circumferatur manuscriptus aliquis Spinosae liber, quo impugnata religione atheismus propugnatur”.³²

En joignant un exemplaire des *Opera Posthuma* de Spinoza dans une lettre de 1678, le vicaire apostolique de foi janséniste observe que “in illis quidem non Atheismum sed Deismum ex professo docet. Verum forsitan optandum fuisset, ut potius nullum Deum quam eum Deum commendasset”.³³

Comme on le sait, dans une lettre du 9 septembre 1678, Van Neercassel stigmatisera aussi le maître de latin de Spinoza, l’“ex-jesuita cui nomen Vanden Eijnde”, considéré “malus Christianus, vel potius christianae religionis desertor”³⁴ et déjà connu du Saint-Siège. En effet, le secrétariat d’État, minutieusement informé des événements politiques par l’abondante correspondance échangée entre les nonces et les internonces, avait connaissance de la conjuration contre Louis XIV, dans laquelle le maître de Spinoza avait été impliqué. On peut lire dans une lettre datée du 28 septembre 1674, de Fabrizio Spada, nonce à Paris, au cardinal Altieri:

Des commissaires ont été députés pour examiner la cause du chevalier de Rohan: on en déduit que l’affaire est très importante; le chevalier est gardé avec le plus grand soin, et s’il est vrai, comme on le dit, qu’il ait tenté de se tuer, il est à craindre qu’il soit coupable. On a emprisonné beaucoup d’autres personnes, entre autres *un maître d’école* [Fran-

³⁰ Pastor esquisse un portrait du vicaire apostolique dans de nombreuses pages de sa monumentale *Storia dei Papi dalla fine del Medio Evo*, XIV-II (Roma, 1932; éd. orig.: Freiburg in Breisgau, 1929), p. 360 et suiv.

³¹ Klever, “Letters to and from Neercassel”, p. 330-331.

³² La transcription complète de cette lettre avait été publiée dans G. Brom, *Archivalia in Italië, belangrijk voor de geschiedenis van Nederland II* (’s-Gravenhage, 1911), p. 152-155. Pour le passage cité, cf. Klever, “Letters to and from Neercassel”, p. 332.

³³ Lettre de J. van Neercassel à F. Barberini, jointe à une lettre à L. Casoni, légat pontifical à la paix de Nimègue, du 13 septembre 1678: cf. Klever, “Letters to and from Neercassel”, p. 337.

³⁴ Le passage est extrait d’une lettre de J. van Neercassel à L. Casoni: cf. Klever, “Letters to and from Neercassel”, p. 335.

çois Affinius Van den Enden], et aujourd'hui on a conduit à la Bastille un certain marquis Créqui-Bernieulles, de Normandie.³⁵

Personnalité importante, non seulement du point de vue de ses rapports avec l'Église de Rome, mais aussi pour l'activité religieuse exercée dans les Provinces-Unies, Van Neercassel est un personnage central du panorama politique hollandais autour des années de la paix de Nimègue. Les documents conservés dans les archives du Vatican témoignent d'un zèle religieux peut-être trop enclin à la politique expansionniste de Louis XIV, et ce n'est pas un hasard si, en 1676, le secrétaire d'État du Saint-Siège recommande à l'abbé Sebastiano Antonio Tanara, internonce à Bruxelles, de ne négliger aucune "possibilité qu'il peut avoir [...] de favoriser l'armistice", afin que "les conditions de Paix insérées soient les plus avantageuses pour les Catholiques qui habitent dans les pays où dominent les principes hérétiques et particulièrement en Hollande, en prenant, pour cela, des accords avec l'Évêque de Castoria, Vicaire Apostolique".

L'internonce répond à cette requête en soulignant l'importance de l'évêque, auquel "les Hollandais reprochent seulement [...] d'avoir publiquement, en démontrant une joie excessive, exercé la religion catholique et d'en avoir célébré les fonctions Episcopales à Utrecht et dans d'autres villes occupées par les Armées françaises".³⁶

³⁵ Cf. *Correspondance du nonce en France Fabrizio Spada (1674-1675)*, éd. Ségolène de Dainville-Barbiche (Roma, 1982), p. 365. Sur Van den Enden, sur la conspiration à laquelle il a pu être mêlé et la bibliographie concernant ce sujet, voir W. Klever, "A New Source of Spinozism: Franciscus Van den Enden", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 29 (1991), p. 613-631.

³⁶ L'internonce de Bruxelles soulignait que quelques ministres espagnols avaient "in poco buona considerazione Mons.^r Vicario Apostolico d'Olanda", alors que les Hollandais "imputano solamente il Vicario Apostolico l'haver troppo pubblicamente, e con dimostrazioni di soverchio giubilo essercitata la Religione Cattolica e fattene le Funzioni Episcopali in Utrecht, et altre Città occupate dall'Armi francesi" (ASV, Cité du Vatican: Nunziature diverse 211, c. 85, Bruxelles, 6 febbraio 1677). Ces événements concernent l'époque de l'occupation française des Pays Bas, lorsque "il vicario apostolico Giovanni Neerkassel in Utrecht aveva potuto comparire del tutto liberamente quale vescovo cattolico e celebrare la festa del Corpus Domini con gran pompa interamente come nei tempi cattolici di una volta; il baldacchino sopra il Santissimo era stato portato da quattro ufficiali francesi": Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, XIV-I, p. 676; cf. Brom, *Archivalia in Italië* III, p. 387 et suiv., 408 et suiv. Ce qui était arrivé fit beaucoup de bruit à Rome où l'on suivait les événements de la guerre avec attention: "Molti politici anche in Roma deploravano le perdite degli Olandesi, come se essi medesimi ne fossero tocchi. In ambienti ecclesiastici, però, si affermò un apprezzamento diverso. Da più di cento anni i cattolici nella repubblica olandese

L'année suivante, dans une lettre chiffrée du 7 mai 1678, et toujours depuis Rome, on recommande au nonce apostolique de Nimègue de s'en tenir aux indications de Van Neercassel et de Niels Stensen, déjà représentant du Saint-Siège à cette date: "Mons. de Castoria et Mons. Stenon, Vicaires Apostoliques, l'un en Hollande et l'autre en Saxe, sauront Vous suggérer ce qu'il convient de demander en faveur des Catholiques".³⁷

L'histoire de la promulgation des interdictions de la censure des oeuvres de Spinoza, avec les particularités qui ont été relevées, fut fortement influencée par les conclusions des discussions théologiques, par les stratégies politiques et par les luttes intestines des très puissants ordres religieux qui, sur la toile de fond de la question janséniste, secouèrent la Cour de Rome au cours des dernières décennies du siècle. Les motifs qui inspirèrent les deux décrets successifs mûrirent en effet à des moments très différents du succès de la doctrine de Jansénius en Italie.³⁸

Dans une lettre du 5 août 1678 à Van Neercassel, l'agent de Port-Royal, Pontchâteau, rapporte que le "grand Arnauld" considère le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* comme l' "un des plus méchants livres du monde" et qu'il se donne de la peine afin que le livre ne soit pas vendu en France ("Il l'a fait voir à M. de Condom afin d'empêcher par son crédit qu'il ne se débitast en France").³⁹ De concert avec

erano stati defraudati dei loro diritti più sacri e perseguitati in ogni guisa, e tuttora questa persecuzione durava; il gabinetto dell'Aia aveva fatto ripetutamente causa comune con i nemici più accaniti della Chiesa, e a tutti gli scribacchini antipapali si seguiva ad assicurare un rifugio nei Paesi Bassi. Come appariva rallegrante ora la prospettiva che il re cristianissimo abbattesse questa cittadella del calvinismo e usasse delle sue vittorie, secondo le sue assicurazioni alte e solenni, per il bene della religione cattolica". Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, XIV-I, p. 672-673.

³⁷ ASV, Cité du Vatican: Nunziature diverse 212, c. 226.

³⁸ La littérature sur le jansénisme est extrêmement abondante. Pour l'époque qui nous intéresse, cf. L. Ceyssens & S. De Munter, *La seconde période du jansénisme* (Bruxelles-Roma, 1968-1974), 2 vols. En Italie, le jansénisme a eu un itinéraire tout à fait particulier: "Il giansenismo nella sua rapida comparsa tra noi, limitata territorialmente ad alcune regioni, trovando proseliti solo tra uomini di Chiesa, non diede luogo né ad un libro che valesse ad assicurarne la memoria né ad un uomo o ad un fatto che imprimevano un solco durevole nella memoria popolare, che creassero il nucleo intorno a cui potesse formarsi la tradizione" (A.C. Jemolo, *Il giansenismo in Italia prima della Rivoluzione* (Bari, 1928), p. ix. En soulignant la différence entre le jansénisme italien et le jansénisme français au XVII^{ème} siècle, Jemolo parle des prosélytes d'Italie comme de "strani giansenisti, che proprio non rassomigliano a quelli che tanto turbano i regni di Luigi XIV e di Luigi XV" (p. 98).

³⁹ Lettre de Pontchâteau à Van Neercassel du 5 août 1678: cf. Klever, "Letters to and from Neercassel", p. 334.

l'habile diplomate du Saint-Siège Lorenzo Casoni, riposte en soulignant l'avis négatif d'Arnauld, Van Neercassel jugeait que rien plus de dangereux n'avait jamais été écrit ("magis exitiosum") pour la foi que la lettre envoyée en Italie par Spinoza à Albert Burgh, le jeune converti que le même vicaire des Provinces-Unies avait inutilement essayé de faire revenir en Hollande.⁴⁰

Le jansénisme de Van Neercassel avait trouvé à Rome un soutien fort et une protection sûre en la personne de Lorenzo Casoni, qui avait participé à la paix de Nimègue en tant que délégué pontifical. Celui-ci réussit facilement à éviter, pour quelques années, la mise à l'index de l'*Amor penitens*, l'oeuvre sur l'administration du sacrement de la pénitence, écrite par le vicaire apostolique des Provinces-Unies, et très appréciée par Quesnel et Arnauld, qui avaient peut-être activement participé à sa rédaction.⁴¹ Elle fut interdite, en 1690 seulement, "donec corrigatur"—après avoir été examinée par une

⁴⁰ Cf. lettre de Spinoza à A. Burgh, dans: Spinoza, *Opera*, éd. Gebhardt, IV, p. 316-324.

⁴¹ J. van Neercassel, *Amor penitens, sive de divini Amoris ad poenitentiam necessitate, et recto clavium usu, libri duo* (Embricae, 1683). Le gros volume (567 pages) fut édité une deuxième fois en 1685 et ultérieurement en 1785. L'oeuvre a été interdite "donec corrigatur" par un décret du 20 juin 1690: cf. *Index librorum prohibitorum SS.mi D.N. Benedicti XIV. Pontificis maximi jussu recognitus, atque editus* (Romae, 1758), p. 43. Dans la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane est conservé un manuscrit rédigé par Van Neercassel pour se disculper des accusations portées contre lui par la Congrégation. Ce texte est daté du 27 mars 1686 et est donc d'une époque antérieure à la condamnation de son livre (signature: Borgiano Latino 38, cc. 28). Le vicaire apostolique commence ainsi: "Eminentissimi Domini, Patres Rever.^{mi} Patroni Colendissimi. Exhibitum est Eminentijs Vestris Scriptum, in quo Liber meus, cui titulus *Amor Poenitens*, trium crassorum et palmarium errorum, quibus plures alij accedant, vehementer accusatur, ut tanquam manifestis scatens erroribus condemnatur, eiusque lectio fidelibus interdicatur". Pour les lettres de Van Neercassel aux jansénistes, cf. A. Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, II (Paris-Lausanne, 1775), *passim* et, en particulier, IV, p. 155-184. Pastor reporte que Quesnel a traduit en français l'*Amor penitens* "adoperando per la verità la sua 'retorica critica' per la quale intendeva l'arte di velare in tal modo le idee effettive da sottrarle alla censura". Pastor ajoute aussi que "dalla penna dell'Arnauld provengono alcune appendici nel libro, e in esso v'è qualche cosa scritta secondo le istruzioni di lui": Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, XIV-I, p. 361 et suiv. Cf. A. Le Roy, *Un janséniste en exil. Correspondance de Pasquier Quesnel*, I (Paris, 1900), p. 34-35, lettre de Quesnel à Van Neercassel, 1 janvier 1684, sur la traduction de l'*Amor penitens* de Quesnel. Voir aussi p. 32-33, Quesnel à Van Neercassel, 28 janvier 1683; p. 71-72, Quesnel à M. Fromentin, 12 juin 1686, sur Van Neercassel qui "est mort à Zwolle, dans l'Over-Yssel, achevant une visite pastorale qu'il était allé faire dans un pays où la religion est plus persécutée et où il courait beaucoup de risque". Des éloges du volume de Van Neercassel sont reportées dans Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 661, 671-677 et suiv.

congrégation spéciale de cardinaux—quand, sous le pontificat d’Alexandre VIII, Casoni fut privé de toute charge à la Curie et assumait la nonciature de Naples.⁴²

Une ample relation des rapports entre Casoni et Van Neercassel est contenue dans un *Mémorial à l’occasion de la possible Promotion de M. Casoni Assesseur de la Congrégation du Saint-Office*, conservé dans la Bibliothèque Vaticane.⁴³ Le rédacteur anonyme du manuscrit rapporte, qu’outre à favoriser le molinisme, Casoni “était encore moins circonspect quant à la protection du jansénisme”, à tel point que “les Agents que ce parti avait à Rome, pour la France, la Flandre ou les Pays-Bas, ne faisaient rien sans ses conseils”. En effet, “leurs livres et leurs mémoires” étaient “habituellement envoyés à son nom”. En outre, et ceci devait apparaître comme plus grave encore, “il avait même entrepris d’élever au cardinalat l’Evêque de Castoria, un des disciples les plus zélés de Jansénius [...] Il avait formé le même projet en faveur de M. Arnauld, parce qu’il semblait que le progrès du jansénisme était son but principal et la première de ses préoccupations”. Casoni, considéré comme étant “un prélat ennemi de la tradition antique et, en général, favorable aux hérétiques”, fut accusé de gagner sournoisement les bonnes grâces du pape Innocent XI: “quand M. Casoni doutait que son crédit soit assez puissant pour induire ce pape en faveur des Jansénistes, il faisait venir à son secours des lettres de l’Evêque de Castoria et de M. Arnauld”.

Et toujours à propos de Van Neercassel et du soutien offert par Casoni à la cause du jansénisme hollandais:

Il avait l’intention d’élever l’Evêque de Castoria à la dignité de cardinal et de le mettre à la tête d’une Congrégation en partie pour les missions de Hollande [...] L’entente secrète qui fut établie entre MM. Casoni et Arnauld, donna l’occasion à ce Docteur, qui s’était réfugié aux Pays-Bas, de répandre le jansénisme dans les Diocèses de Liège, de Cologne et de Trèves et jusqu’en Angleterre.⁴⁴

⁴² Pour des références bibliographiques sur L. Casoni, cf. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 21 (Roma, 1978), *ad vocem*. L’article a été édité par G. Pignatelli. En 1690 toujours, a été aussi publié une épitaphe de 8 pages sur Van Neercassel intitulée: *Scarabaeus a tumultu depulsus sive epitaphium reverendissimi clarissimique viri, Joannis Episcopi Castoriensis, restitutum* (Irenopoli, 1690).

⁴³ BAV, Cité du Vatican: Vaticano Latino 10858, cc. 273-275, *Memoriale in occasione della creduta Promozione del Sr. Casoni Assessore della Congregazione del S. Ufficio*.

⁴⁴ A la mort de Van Neercassel en 1686, Casoni, sur conseil d’Arnauld, appuya auprès du pape et des cardinaux de la Congrégation de Propaganda Fide, la nomination de Van Heussen d’abord et de Peter Codde après, “il quale condurrà la chiesa olandese su posizioni di rottura con la Santa Sede”. Cf. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, *ad vocem* “L. Casoni”.

Bien qu'animé par des intentions polémiques, le témoignage reporté semble de bonne source quant à la description de la politique de Casoni. En outre, l'intérêt de Van Neercassel dans le choix du refuge d'Arnauld est bien connu.⁴⁵

D'autre part Casoni faisait le nécessaire pour enrichir sa bibliothèque chez les libraires hollandais. Dans une lettre de Nimègue du 12 novembre 1677, le diplomate du Saint-Siège rapportait avoir acheté de grosses quantités de livres en Hollande:

Je me suis acheté une demi-librairie, pour la plus grande partie de livres français et de matériel des magasins courants. J'ai toutefois pris une bonne part d'auteurs latins anciens cum notis variorum imprimés par l'Elzevir, et parmi ceux-ci les lettres familières de Cicéron récemment éditées. Dès les premiers jours après mon arrivée, Mons. l'Evêque de Castoria m'a offert les Oeuvres Complètes du Cardinal Bona [janséniste célèbre], qui sont devenues la première pierre de ma bibliothèque.⁴⁶

Les oeuvres de Spinoza n'avaient pas encore été condamnées quand le puissant secrétaire d'État et adversaire de Casoni, Alderano Cibo, écrivit à l'internonce de Bruxelles, Sebastiano Antonio Tanara, afin qu'«à l'avenir, il continue à présenter diligemment à la Congrégation du Saint-Office, tout ce qui s'enseigne, avec préjudice pour notre Sainte foi, dans les congrès publics et privés. Qui en sont les chefs et qui y intervient, qu'il envoie tous les traités, et toutes les

⁴⁵ "Comunque, il Neercassel era pieno di riverenza entusiastica per Port-Royal ed i capi dei giansenisti, e fu perciò fatale per la missione olandese, che proprio durante il governo di lui molti dei più eminenti capi della setta cercassero rifugio in Olanda; essi guadagnarono sotto lui una influenza, che portò a un cambiamento completo nei sentimenti degli ecclesiastici olandesi e preparò le vie allo scisma. Il vicario apostolico ebbe gran parte in questo cambiamento. Allorché Antonio Arnauld pensò alla fuga nei Paesi Bassi, il Neercassel fece scrivere a questo uomo 'così santo' che lo si accoglierebbe 'come un angelo del cielo' e si manifestò tutto entusiasta, allorché l'Arnauld venne effettivamente": Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, XIV-II, p. 360-361. Pastor se sert ici du témoignage contenu dans [Dupac De Bellegarde], *Histoire abrégée de l'église métropolitaine d'Utrecht, principalement depuis la révolution arrivée dans les VII Provinces-Unies des Pays-Bas sous Philippe II jusqu'à présent* (Utrecht, 1765), dans laquelle on peut lire à la p. 456: "M. Arnauld y avoit été reçu, en 1680, comme un ange de Dieu par M. de Neercassel [...] Il y avoit alors près de 20 ans que ce prélat entretenoit déjà avec cet illustre persécuté un intime commerce des lettres. C'étoit par son canal et par celui de M. l'abbé de Pontchâteau que M. de Neercassel avoit contracté une union des plus cordiales avec tout ce qu'on appelle Messieurs de Port-Royal et avec les plus illustres évêques, qui leur étoient unis".

⁴⁶ BAV, Cité du Vatican: Borgiano Latino 503, c. 78v, lettre de L. Casoni à G. Pastrizio, Nimègue 12 novembre 1677.

thèses, qui sont édités et dans lesquels sont inclus les dogmes ou les propositions qui méritent d'être soumis à la censure, et qu'il donne tous les éclaircissements qu'il jugera nécessaires à ce sujet, afin que la Congrégation puisse prendre les décisions nécessaires à la nature d'un argument de telle importance".⁴⁷

Le cardinal Barberini, qui avait pris part à la dispute sur le jansénisme, en rapport épistolaire avec Van Neercassel, lui avait demandé des nouvelles "de Spinosae vita et scriptis".⁴⁸ Dans une lettre à Mons. Piazza, assesseur du Saint-Office, dans laquelle il semble justement se rapporter aux hauts et aux bas de la vie du vicaire apostolique des Provinces-Unies, Barberini confesse qu'il se sent "affaibli par les non-injustes querelles des Eminents Messieurs les Zélés contre des évêques, bien que je ne le retienne pas mal considéré par le Saint-Siège, et ceci malgré ses erreurs. Et je suis plus fâché de voir qu'une ample Congrégation d'Hérétiques [...] soit appelée Janséniste".⁴⁹

S'il est vrai qu'en Italie le jansénisme du XVII^{ème} siècle bouleversa, durant sa fugace apparition dans notre péninsule, presque complètement les hommes d'Église, la première circulation des oeuvres de Spinoza en Italie est due—qu'ils le veuillent ou non—à des sympathisants ou à de présumés adhérents à ce courant doctrinal ou, de toute façon, à des adversaires des jésuites.

⁴⁷ "Ma siccome ha fatto per il passato, così anche continui a rappresentare diligentemente in avvenire alla S. Cong.ne del S. Off.o tutto quello che s'insegna ne' pubblici, e ne' privati Congressi in pregiudizio della nostra S.ta fede. Chi siano quelli che ne sono i Capi, e chi v'intervenga; e trasmetta qua' tutti i trattati, e tutte le tesi, che vanno uscendo alle stampe, ne' quali siano compresi dogmi, o proposizioni, che meritino d'essere sottoposte alla censura, e dia tutti que' lumi, che sopra di ciò riterà necessarij, accioc[c]hé la S. Cong.ne possa prendere quelle deliberazioni, che si convengono alla qualità di un affare di sì grand'importanza": ASV, Cité du Vatican: Nunziatura di Fiandra 146, *Registro di lettere scritte dall'Em.mo Cardinal Cybo al S. Abate di S. Maria Ministro Ap.co in Bruxelles*, c. 19v, Roma 13 febbraio 1677. Quelques jours après, Cybo écrit que le pape se sent "obligato dal suo supremo Ministero al governo, et alla preservazione del Gregge Cattolico, e per ciò a farlo provvedere d'idonei Custodi, massime ove maggior se ne riconosce il bisogno, sicome hora, per disgrazia de' tempi, succede in coteste Provincie": *ibid.*, c. 23r, Rome 27 février 1677.

⁴⁸ Lettre de L. Casoni à J. van Neercassel du 6 septembre 1678: Klever, "Letters to and from Neercassel", p. 334. Trois lettres de Van Neercassel à F. Barberini, dans BAV, Cité du Vatican: Vaticano Latino 9067, cc. 241-246. La dernière de ces lettres, datée Ultrajecti 25 novembre 1677, a été publiée par Brom, *Archivalia in Italië* II, p. 152-155.

⁴⁹ BAV, Cité du Vatican: Barberino Latino 2041, c. 67v, lettre de F. Barberini à M. Piazza, Rome 5 juillet 1676.

A la date du premier décret, sous le pontificat d'Innocent XI, le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, l'*Ethica*, les *Epistolae* et le *Tractatus Politicus* avaient été mis à l'index. L'opinion d'Arnauld sur les *Opera Posthuma*, interdits après la mort de l'auteur,⁵⁰ a déjà été reportée. Il faut également rappeler que dans les bibliothèques historiques romaines, constituées en grande partie entre le XVI^{ème} et le XVIII^{ème} siècle et dont les fonds les plus importants proviennent des plus illustres familles de ce temps,⁵¹ les éditions originales de l'oeuvre de Spinoza acquises à la même époque sont présentes en plusieurs exemplaires, même si elles sont conservées dans un département spécial réservé aux livres "haeretici",⁵² et si leur consultation était consentie à quelques élus à la lecture seulement.

En dehors de la bibliothèque du cardinal Neri Corsini, les oeuvres de Spinoza sont aussi signalées dans les anciens registres du cardinal Casanate, qui faisait partie de ceux qui "considéraient sans excessive sévérité un mouvement qui se réfugiait derrière Saint Augustin en théologie et qui [...] poursuivait un idéal de rigueur et de purification en morale".⁵³ Le puissant et ambigu Lorenzo Casoni, de concert avec Van Neercassel, avait même soutenu Gilles Gabrielis, auteur d'un volume d'*Essais moraux*, qui fut accusé d'être ou "complice des erreurs" des quétistes, ou "disciple" de Spinoza "comme le dit la

⁵⁰ Pour les rapports, à cette époque, entre Innocent XI et Arnauld—dont seuls quelques oeuvres parmi les moins importantes figurent dans l'*Index librorum prohibitorum*—cf. F. De Bojani, *Innocent XI. Sa correspondance avec ses nonces (21 Septembre 1676–31 Décembre 1679)*, II (Rome, 1910), p. 11-26.

⁵¹ Cf. *Bibliothecae selectae. Da Cusano a Leopardi*, éd. E. Canone (Firenze, 1993). La Congrégation était toutefois très consciente de la fonction de propagande et des risques pour l'ordre public provoqués par les opérations de censure. Ce n'est pas un hasard, par exemple, si dans la correspondance d'Ottavio Falconieri au cardinal Barberini se trouvent souvent des invitations à de "prudētissime riflessioni [...] in ordine all'evitare quei disturbi, che altre volte sono succeduti nella proibizione di simili scritture": BAV, Cité du Vatican: Barberino Latino 6829, c. 61r, lettre du 14 juillet 1674.

⁵² A propos de la ségrégation réservée à la littérature interdite, dans les bibliothèques, le luthérien D. Francke observe: "Peculiaris assignatur iis locus (qui infernus apud quosdam audit) in bibliothecarum angulis, ubi capsula erigitur in qua recondi solent. Ibi jacent in tenebris, nigro ut plurimum corio compacti, nigroque tincto colore ut vel sic intuitibus horrorem inculcant". D. Francke, *Disquisitio academica de papistarum indicibus librorum prohibitorum et expurgandorum* (Lipsiae, 1684), p. 177. Ce passage est cité dans Neveu, *L'erreur et son juge*, p. 419.

⁵³ "Consideravano senza soverchia severità un movimento che nella teologia si faceva scudo di sant'Agostino ed in morale [...] perseguiva un ideale di rigore e di purificazione". Jemolo, *Il giansenismo in Italia*, p. 100.

umeur".⁵⁴ Plus tard, le Napolitain d'adoption Paolo Mattia Doria, reportant dans l'*Introduction* à ses *Discours critiques philosophiques* "toutes les difficultés qui se sont présentées à mon esprit en étudiant les philosophies des autres", mentionne Spinoza en compagnie de Nicole et du rigorisme.⁵⁵

Antonio Magliabechi, le bibliothécaire des Medicis, admirateur de Pascal et de ses *Provinciales*, qui procurera "deux volumes" des oeuvres de Spinoza à Michelangelo Fardella, était mal vu par les jésuites et ami de l'augustinien Enrico Noris et des plus fidèles partisans des doctrines de Jansénius.⁵⁶

La réitération du décret d'interdiction des oeuvres de Spinoza en 1690 coïncide avec le programme répressif mis en oeuvre par la Curie romaine dans le sud de l'Italie, afin de limiter la protestation anti-curialiste de la soi-disant 'classe civile'. Dans un climat de dure polémique contre les privilèges ecclésiastiques, une union particulière était née à Naples entre les représentants des différents milieux culturels, scientifiques, littéraires et de Palais, qui s'étaient engagés dans une oeuvre de profond renouvellement. Parallèlement au grand succès des oeuvres de Grotius—interdites à plusieurs reprises par la Congrégation de l'Index⁵⁷—on assista, durant ces années, à une diffusion souterraine mais significative de la pensée de Spinoza, dont les conséquences sur le plan politique n'échappaient à aucun des deux partis antagonistes. La tension qui s'était accumulée au cours des années, culmina enfin avec le célèbre 'processo agli ateisti', qui se tint à Naples entre 1688 et 1697 à un moment particulièrement complexe, quand, à Rome, les 'Mathématiciens' et les 'Physiciens-Mathématiciens' furent condamnés, tandis que l'accusation de spinozisme planait sur tous.⁵⁸

On sait que Pietro Giannone possédait des *excerpta* manuscrits du *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* et de l'*Ethica*; Giuseppe Valletta, l'un des

⁵⁴ Le jugement est de D. Bernini: cf. *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani, ad vocem* "Lorenzo Casoni".

⁵⁵ Cf. P.M. Doria, *Discorsi critici filosofici intorno alla filosofia degl'Antichi e de i Moderni, ed in particolare intorno alla filosofia di Renato des Cartes* (Venezia, 1724). Ce passage est signalé dans Zambelli, *La formazione filosofica di Antonio Genovesi*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Sur l'admiration d'A. Magliabechi pour Pascal, cf. la lettre de A. Magliabechi à L. Panciatichi, publiée dans *Raccolta di prose fiorentine*, V (Venezia, 1735), p. 116.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Index librorum prohibitorum SS.mi D.N. Benedicti XIV*, p. 106.

⁵⁸ Cf. L. Amabile, *Il Santo Ufficio della Inquisizione di Napoli*, II (Città di Castello, 1892), p. 60-61. Pour une reconstruction des vicissitudes du procès, cf. L. Osbat, *L'inquisizione a Napoli. Il processo agli ateisti 1688-1697* (Roma, 1974).

lettrés napolitains les plus connus de l'époque, conservait dans sa bibliothèque un exemplaire du *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*⁵⁹ et en parlera longuement, même si c'est avec des intentions polémiques, dans son *Historia philosophica*; Costantino Grimaldi aura une connaissance directe des différentes oeuvres de Spinoza; Domenico Aulisio, maître à penser de Giannone, citera explicitement la doctrine de Spinoza et enfin, Giambattista Vico ne manquera pas de lire de nombreuses oeuvres du philosophe.⁶⁰

D'autre part, à Naples, dans le cadre de l'«Accademia degli Investiganti», qui fut active dans la seconde moitié du XVII^{ème} siècle, Francesco d'Andrea et Leonardo Di Capua étaient arrivés à des positions très semblables à celles de Spinoza et le dialogue à différents niveaux entre Di Capua et Aulisio et, plus tard, entre Doria et Spinelli, ou le violent débat entre Grimaldi et le jésuite Giovan Battista De Benedictis, portaient sur les points cruciaux de la pensée de Spinoza: l'interprétation matérialiste ou spiritualiste de la *res extensa*, le contraste entre nécessité et liberté de l'individu, le danger du déterminisme.

Le rapport avec Spinoza se présente donc entre la fin du XVII^{ème} siècle et la première moitié du XVIII^{ème} comme une référence qui se répète dans le débat culturel des intellectuels napolitains, conscients, d'une part, de la portée éversive inhérente aux discussions sur les Ecritures, sur l'inspiration des prophètes et l'authenticité du Pentateuque et, d'autre part, préoccupés en même temps, de sauver le possible sur le plan de l'orthodoxie. Ce n'est pas un hasard si le volume *Des écoles sacrées d'Alexandrie* de Domenico Aulisio—qui laissera en héritage à Giannone une copie manuscrite de l'*Ethica* de Spinoza—se termine de manière emblématique par une référence à 1670, l'année de publication du *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. L'oeuvre posthume, publiée en 1723 par «son héritier et neveu» Niccolò Ferrara Aulisio se conclut en effet par les paroles suivantes, en italien dans l'original:

1670: Baruch Spinoza, en utilisant mal la philosophie de René Descartes, établit que la matière est éternelle et que le monde est né

⁵⁹ Cf. G. Ricuperati, «La prima formazione di Pietro Giannone», dans: *Saggi e ricerche sul Settecento* (Napoli, 1968), p. 117.

⁶⁰ Sur le milieu culturel napolitain du XVII^{ème} siècle, cf.: S. Mastellone, *Pensiero politico e vita culturale a Napoli nella seconda metà del Seicento* (Messina-Firenze, 1965); R. De Maio, «Il problema del quietismo napoletano», *Rivista storica italiana* 81 (1969), p. 721-744, et *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna* (Napoli, 1970).

sans architecte. 1723: à la fin du mois de juin, la présente oeuvre posthume du célèbre homme de lettres, comte palatin, etc. D. Aulizio, est publiée en deux volumes et déjà divisée et réduite à sa forme finale.

L'exaspération de la politique religieuse et culturelle poursuivie par Cosimo III, dans les territoires du Grand-Duché de Toscane n'est surement pas étrangère à cette coïncidence de dates. C'est là en effet qu'en 1691, l'interdiction absolue d'enseigner, "par écrit ou oralement", les doctrines atomistiques et de Démocrite (la "philosophie de Démocrite ou des atomes") dans les universités ou en privé fut émise⁶¹ et là où, selon un témoignage d'Antonio Magliabechi, Cosimo fit rassembler "tous les manuscrits" contraires "à la Piété Chrétienne", "comme d'autres livres indignes comme les Clavicules de Salomon, Piccatrix et autres livres de magie" qui existaient dans la Bibliothèque des Médicis et "se les étant fait porter dans ses appartements, il les brûla de ses propres mains en les approchant d'un Chandelier, et sépara le bon grain de la zizanie".⁶²

Vers la fin du siècle, l'ancien thème de l'imposture des religions, auquel faisaient écho les termes d'un débat jamais complètement assoupi, reprit vie. De curieux textes manuscrits qui rappelaient par leur titre un livre mythique, *De tribus impostoribus*, commencèrent à circuler, et le bibliothécaire des Médicis, le grand 'médiateur culturel' Antonio Magliabechi, annonça presque la réalisation de la périlleuse opération éditoriale, qui en exploitant la célébrité de ce pamphlet légendaire, aboutirait, en 1719, à la publication de *La vie et l'esprit de Spinoza*.⁶³

En effet, dans une lettre de 1691, le bibliothécaire des Médicis avertit que "quelque cerveau dérangé" pourrait, en entendant parler d'une oeuvre intitulée *De tribus impostoribus*, avoir l'impudence de la composer et de la faire imprimer, non seulement en puisant dans les textes d'auteurs "impies", comme Vanini, Hobbes et Spinoza, mais

⁶¹ Pour l'interdiction des doctrines atomistiques, cf. R. Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il governo di Casa Medici*, IV (Firenze, 1781), p. 409.

⁶² Cf. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze: Magl. Cl. VIII, 16, c. 52, *Zibaldone di diverse notizie letterarie*.

⁶³ L'oeuvre, d'auteur anonyme, fut publiée en 1719, mais sans l'indication du lieu d'édition ni de l'éditeur, sous le titre de *La Vie et l'Esprit de Spinoza. Si faute d'un pinceau fidèle, du fameux Spinoza l'on n'a pas peint les traits; la Sagesse étant immortelle, ses écrits ne mourront jamais*. Pour la bibliographie de ce livre et sur l'argument en général, qui a beaucoup été étudié ces dernières années, voir le volume *Trattato dei tre impostori. La vita e lo spirito del Signor Benedetto de Spinoza*, éd. S. Berti (Torino, 1994).

aussi dans ceux de “Catholiques Romains et, de plus, religieux”.⁶⁴

J'imagine donc que quelque bel esprit (comme nous les appelons ici), lisant dans Lipse que Frédéric II avait l'habitude de dire que les Impositeurs avaient été trois, s'invente qu'il existait un livre de ces trois imposteurs, et que cette rumeur se serait répandue peu à peu. [...] Toutefois, je crains que de même que les paroles de Lipse, selon ce que je pense actuellement, aient donné à quelque bel esprit l'occasion d'inventer qu'il existe un livre *de tribus Impostoribus*, les paroles de tant d'autres lettrés qui attestent que cet horrible livre se trouve imprimé, ne fasse venir envie à quelque cerveau dérangé de l'écrire et de le faire naître. Cela serait très facile pour celui qui aurait une idée si diabolique, parce que tant de livres horribles ont été publiés pendant ce siècle, de Vanini, de Hobbes, de Spinoza et cent autres, pleins d'Athéisme, parfois explicite, parfois caché, qu'il pourrait, très facilement, en extraire un gros livre ou un petit. Mais que dois-je dire des livres d'hommes tellement impies? De ceux d'entre-nous, Catholiques Romains, en majeure partie des Religieux, qui sous le prétexte d'écrire contre l'Athéisme avec des arguments faits en faveur de celui-ci, et avec de faibles réponses, l'ont élevé et défendu plutôt que de le réfuter. Celui qui aurait une idée si diabolique trouverait un matériel abondant pour ses intentions scélérates.

Le témoignage de Magliabechi manifeste de manière significative l'ambivalence du débat sur l'athéisme entre le XVII^{ème} et le XVIII^{ème} siècle et la portée innovatrice de la diffusion de la philosophie de Spinoza en Italie.

Seulement au XIX^{ème} siècle, sur le fond des luttes pour la constitution d'un état laïque et unitaire, le débat sur la philosophie de Spinoza deviendra plus serein et plus riche. En particulier, Bertrando Spaventa, rapprochera la pensée de Spinoza de celle de Giordano Bruno, insérant ainsi le “Juif de naissance, & puis deserteur du Judaïsme, et enfin athée”⁶⁵ dans une tradition culturelle empreinte de laïcisme et caractérisée par de fortes tensions anticléricales.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ La lettre de Magliabechi a été récemment publiée dans G. Totaro, “Da Antonio Magliabechi a Philip von Stosch: varia fortuna del ‘De tribus Impostoribus’ e de l’‘Esprit de Spinoza’ a Firenze”, dans: *Bibliothecae selectae*, éd. Canone, p. 377-417.

⁶⁵ Ce sont les paroles du début de l'article *Spinoza (Benoît de)* du *Dictionnaire historique et critique* de P. Bayle, p. 610.

⁶⁶ Avec B. Spaventa, une nouvelle phase de la critique spinozienne est inaugurée en Italie. Penseur laïque, représentant du mouvement connu sous le nom d’*hegelismo napoletano*, Spaventa a consacré de nombreux essais à l'exposition de la pensée de Spinoza qu'il considère “un erede della tradizione di pensiero” à laquelle

La condamnation ecclésiastique de Spinoza continuera toutefois à faire sentir le poids de son influence à travers les siècles, bien au-delà de l'abolition, en 1917, de la Congrégation de l'Index avec le *motu proprio* 'Alloquentes', et de son absorption dans celle du Saint-Office. Ce fut en effet le Saint-Office qui promulga, en 1948, le dernier *Index librorum prohibitorum*, voulu par Pie XII, mais cette Congrégation continue encore à exister, même si sous le nouveau nom de "Congrégation pour la doctrine de la foi", capable de transmettre une image différente et d'évoquer des scénarios moins sombres.

l'Italie, à son avis, "ha contribuito con la filosofia del Cinquecento", cf. E. Giancotti, *Baruch Spinoza 1632-1677* (Roma, 1985), p. 140. La Congrégation de l'Index condamna tous ses *Opera omnia philosophica* par le décret du 22 décembre 1876. Les essais les plus importants de Spaventa pour l'histoire du spinozisme, en ce qui concerne également Bruno, sont les suivants: *Il concetto dell'infinità in Bruno* (1866), *Saggi sulla filosofia del Mamiani. Critica dell'infinità dell'attributo* (1854-1856), *La filosofia di Gioberti* (Napoli, 1863), *Il concetto dell'opposizione e lo spinozismo* (Napoli, 1867). Pour la littérature sur les "Napolitains" du XIX^{ème} siècle, cf. G. Oldrini, *L'Ottocento filosofico napoletano nella letteratura dell'ultimo decennio* (Napoli, 1986).

APPENDICE*



S *Acta Indicis Congregationis Doctrinae damnata, prohibita, ac respectibus suspensa fuerant inscribere libri ubique, & quocunque Idiome impressi, imprimendū. Nemo cuiuscunque gradus, & conditionis eoi in posterum vel imprimat, vel legat, vel recitet. Si quis interim habuerit, inquisitoribus, sed decretum Ordinarij: & presentis Decreti notitia tradat sub penis in Indice librorum prohibitorum contentis.*

L I B R I S V N T.

L'Autorité des Euefques sur les *Bisques*. à Cologne 1677.

La Bilancia Politica di tutte l'Opere di Traiano Boccalini. Parte 1. 2. e 3. Castellana 1678.

Cursus Philosophicus in quatuor Tomo diuisus: Autore Octauio Catreneo. Tomus quartus, completens Quaestiones, & Dissertationes in vniuersam Aristotelis Metaphysicam. Romae 1677. donèc corrigatur.

Epistolae Doctorum quorundam Virorum ad B.D.S. & Auditoris Responsum, ad aliorum eius operum elucidationem non parum facientes. Ethices Pars 1. 2. 3. 4. & 5. incipit: Per causam sui intelligo id, cuius essentia inuoluit existentiam, &c. finiens verò: Sed omnia pra clara difficulta, quam rara sunt.

Io: Benedicti Carpzoui Doctoris Theologi, & in Academia Lipsensi Professoris, &c. Isagoge in libros Ecclesiarum Lutheranarum Symbolicos. Lipsiae 1675.

Io: Fabrici Oratio Inauguralis de vtilitate, quam Theologiae studiosus ex itinere capere potest Italico. Adiectis Tabula figurarum, Luce Iconum, quibus nonnulla de Graecis, & Romanis Ecclesiae Ritibus dicta oculis subiunguntur, & Notis, &c. Altorodori 1678.

Io: Lautonij Explicata Ecclesiae traditio circa Canonem: Omnis vtriusque sexus. Lutetiae Parisiorum 1672.

Io: Ludouici Schonleben Carnioli Iabacensis, &c. Palma Virginea. Salisburgi 1671.

Io: Prideaux S. Theol. D. & apud Oxonienses eiusdem Professoris Regij, &c. Opera Theologica, quae latine extant omnia. Tiguri 1672.

L. Christiani Friderici Garmann: Merisburgensis, Physici Chemnicensis Ordinarij, Academi Curiosi de Miraculis mortuorum. Lipsiae 1670.

Orationi Panegyricae del P. D. Carlo Antonio Muratori Parte 1. & 2. donèc corrigatur.

Remarques sur vn liure intitulé: Theologie morale, ou Resolution des Cas de Conscience, Selon l'Ecriture Sainte, les Canons, & les Saints Peres; Ecrites par L. Rémonde Prêtre, & Docteur en Theologie à vn de ses Amis. Tome premier, & second. A Auzon 1678.

De Sacrificijs libri duo: Autore Guilielmo Outramo. Londini 1677.

Tractatus Politicus, in quo demonstratur, quomodo Societas, vbi Imperium Monarchicum locum habet, sicut & ea, vbi optimi imperant, debet institui, nè in Tyranniam labatur, & vt pax, libertasque Civium inuoluta maneant.

Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, continens Dissertationes aliquot, quibus ostenditur libertatem philosophandi, non tantum salus pietate, & Reipublicae pace posse concedi, sed eandem nisi cum pace Reipublicae, ipsaque pietate, tolli non posse. Hamburgi 1670.

Vita della Ven. Madre Suor Cherubina dell'Agnus Dei, &c. Scritta da Francesco di Poggio. In Lucca 1678.

In quorum fidem, manu, & sigillis Eminensissimi, & Reuerendissimi Domini Cardinalis Alterij Supradictae Sacrae Congregationis Praefecti, praesens Decretum signatum, & authenticum fuit. Roma in Palatio Apostolico Vaticano die 13. Martij 1679.

P. Card. de Alterijs Praef.

Loco + Sigilli.



Fr. Iacobus Riscius Ordinis Praedicatorum Sacrae Congregationis Secretarius.

Die mense, & Anno quibus supra supradictum Decretum affixum, & publicatum fuit, ad vultus Curiae, & in aede Campi Flauri, ac alij locis filijs, & confectis Vrbis per me Thomam Orlandum Apost. Conf.

Pro D. Mag. Curf. Laurentius Barbigoianus Decanus.

ROME, Ex Typographia Reuerendae Cameræ Apostolicæ. 1679.

1679
13. Mar

Fig. 1. Décret de la Congrégation de l'Index (13 mars 1679).

*Pour les textes des décrets voir E. Canone & G. Totaro, "Spinoza all'indice. Nota su un capitolo poco conosciuto dello spinozismo", p. 86-87.

DECRETVM

Sacrae Congregationis Eminentissimorum, & Reuerendissimorum DD. S. R. E. Cardinalium a Sanctiss. D.N. ALEXANDRO Papa VIII. Sanctaq; Sede Apostolica ad Indicem Librorum, eorumdemque permissionem, prohibitionem, expurgationem, & impressionem in Vniuersa Republica Christiana specialiter deputatorum, vbique publicandum.



Sacrae Indicis Congregationis Decreto damnati, prohibiti, ac respectim suspensi fuerunt infra scripti Libri quicumque, & quocumque Idiome impressi, imprimendae. Nemo cuiuscumque gradus, & conditionis eos in posterum, vel imprimat, vel legat, vel retineat. Si quis interim habuerit Inquisitoribus, seu locorum Ordinarijs à presentis Decreti notitia tradat sub penis in Indice Librorum prohibitorum contentis.

LIBRI SVNT.

Antibarionus Magenelis, seu animaduersiones in Annales Cardinalis Baronij cum Epitome lucubrationum criticarum Casauboni in Tomi primi Annos 34. auctore Andrea Magendeo &c. Lugduni Batavorum anno 1679.

A. D. S. Opera Posthuma, quorum series post Praefationem exhibetur: CI) I) C LXXVII.

Breve tratado de la Doctrina Antigua de Dios, y de la nueva de los hombres útil, y necessario para todo fiel christiano. Fue impresso año de 1560.

L'Esprit de Monsieur Arnaud Tiré de sa conduite, & des ecrits de luy, & de ses disciples particulièrement de l'Apologie pour les Catholiques &c. Premiere Partie. Seconde Partie. A Deuenter 1684.

Federici Spanhemij opera sequentia.

Exercitationes de Gratia Vniuersali &c. Lugduni Batavorum 1646.

Continuatio Exercitationum de Gratia Vniuersali.

Eretemata L. pro Gratia Vniuersali expensa, & discussa. Anterotenata C. opposita Vniuersalis Gratiae Defensori.

Gaspari Ziegleri de Diaconis, & Diaconissis veteris Ecclesiae liber commentarius. wittenbergae M. DC. LXXVIII.

Henrici Rixneri Prof. Publ. in Acad. Iul-a de veterum Christianorum circa Eucharistiam institutis, ac ritibus liber. Helmsedadij 1671.

Iohannis Hoornebeckij Miscellanea Sacra, in quibus lectissimae cuiusvis argumenti Theologici, Textualis, dogmatici, elenctici, Praedicti, Historici, & Ritualis veteris, & noui exercitationes, necnon orationes quaedam continentur. Vltraieci 1676.

Iohannis Launoij opuscula sequentia.

Examen de la Preface, & de la Reponse de Monsieur Dauid aux remarques sur la Dissertation du Concile plenier &c. A Paris 1672.

Remarques sur la Dissertation ou l'on montre en quel temps, & pour quelles raisons l'Eglise Vniuerselle consentit à recevoir le Baptême des heretiques &c. A Paris 1675.

Meretricis Babylonicae aureum poculum venenatum Ecclesiae propinatum, huiusque Antidocum &c. id, quod in medium affert Antipapius Lauterianus. Veritropoli 1689.

Nouvelles de la Republique des lettres mois d'Aout 1684. Tome second. A Amsterdam.

Polymathiae Philologicae, seu totius rerum vniuersitatis ad suos ordines reuocatae adumbratio horis subsecuiis à Iohanne Ianssono concinnata. Francofurti, & Lipsiae 1667.

Reflexions sur la cruelle persecution que souffre l'Eglise reformée de France, & sur la conduite, & les actes de la dernière Assemblée du Clergé de ce Royaume &c. l'An 1685.

Ritratto del glorioso Capitano di Christo difensore, & ampliatore della sua Fede S. Ignazio di Loiola Fondatore della Compagnia di Giesù, donec corrigatur.

Del Sagrolanto Sacrificio della Messa per li Sacerdoti nouelli, e per quelli, che sono prossimi alla Dignità Sacerdotale, del Canonico Carlo Caldori da Fabriano. In Iesi per Giosepe Serafini 1682. donec corrigatur.

de quorum fidem manu, & sigillo Eminentiss. & Reuerendiss. D. Card. de Alterijs supradictae Sac. Congreg. Praefecti praesens Decretum signatum, & munitum fuit. Romae in Palatio Apostolico Montis Quirinalis die 29. Augusti 1690.

P. Card. de Alterijs Praef.



Loco + Sigilli.

Fr. Iulius Maria Bianchi Ord. Praed. Sac. Congreg. Secr.

Die prima Septembris 1690. Supradictum Decretum affixum, & publicatum fuit ad valuas Principis Apostolorum, Palatii S. Officii, Cancellariae Apostolicae, & in alijs locis solitis, & consuetis Urbis, per me Agapitum de Magistris Apost. Vrs.

Pro D. Magistro Curforum Hippolytus Petretus Sanctiss. D.N. Curf.

ROMAE, Ex Typographia Reuerendae Camerae Apostolicae. M. DC. XC.

Fig. 2. Décret de la Congrégation de l'Index (29 août 1690).